THE POET AND HER SONGS: ANALYZING THE ART SONGS OF FLORENCE B. PRICE

by

Marquese Carter

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Doctoral Committee

_____
Ayana Smith, Research Director

_____
Brian Horne, Chair

_____
Mary Ann Hart

_____
Gary Arvin

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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my dearly departed grandmother Connie Dye and my late father Larry Carroll, Sr. I mourn that you both cannot witness this work, but rejoice that you may enjoy it from beyond a purer Veil.

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Chapter One: Uncaged: Contextualizing and Appreciating the Art Songs of Florence Price

When he beats his bars and he would be free.
It is not a carol of joy or glee
But a pray'r that he sends from his heart's deep core
But a plea that upward to Heaven he flings,
I know why the caged bird sings![1]

Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Sympathy" (set by Price) resonates with Florence Price's struggle for acceptance as a black female composer. In a 1943 letter to Sergei Koussevitsky, Price stated "To begin with I have two handicaps—those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins."[2] Though starkly aware of the social barriers facing her, she went on to request that Koussevitsky and many of his contemporaries view her music with fresh eyes. Today, the classical vocal canon excludes works by black female composers such as Price, and this can be attributed to the "caged" status of her artistry.

Although Price broke new ground with the 1933 premiere of her *Symphony in E minor* with the Chicago Symphony, her treasury of sophisticated songs has been largely forgotten. In addition, scholars have not completed the work of placing Florence Price's song repertory in the context of the overall development of the American song idiom. An exploration of Price's wide-ranging stylistic influences reveals that Price not only followed an "Americanist" framework, as suggested by Ruth C. Friedberg, but created a uniquely incorporative aesthetic.[3] This aesthetic transcended the oppressive limitations of race and gender, bridging the gap between European song composition (largely French and German lineages) and black vernacular music.

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[1] Paul Laurence Dunbar cited in Florence B. Price, *44 Art Songs and Spirituals: Medium/High Voice*, ed. Richard Heard (Fayetteville, AR: ClarNan Editions, 2015), 119-121.

[2] Florence B. Price, *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2*, ed. Rae Linda Brown and Wayne Shirley, vol. 19, *Music of the United States of America* (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2008), xxxv.

[3] Ruth C. Friedberg and Robin Fisher, "Settings by Six 'Americanists,'" in *American Art Song and American Poetry* (2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 49-65.

By spending time with song manuscripts housed at the University of Arkansas Special Collections library, it is possible to explore Price's compositional style. An exploration of Price's life and influences provides valuable context for analysis.

The Life and Social Milieu of Florence Price

Her Life

Florence B. Price was born "Florence Beatrice Smith" to Dr. James Smith and Florence Irene Gulliver in 1887.[4] Price had the benefit of having a black father and a mixed-race mother, allowing her to pass as white by virtue of her fair complexion. Dr. Smith was a successful dentist in Little Rock, AR, which was known as a haven for black business owners during Reconstruction.[5] Price's upper-class status undoubtedly afforded her a certain level of social mobility and class privilege. Florence Price's daughter, Florence Price Robinson, wrote on a series of notecards that her grandmother pressured her mother to pass as white.

> My grandmother didn't want my mother to be a Negro so when she took her to Boston, she rented an expensive apt [sic: apartment] with a maid and forced my mother to say her birthplace was not L.R. [sic: Little Rock] but Mexico.[6]

From 1903 to 1906 she attended the New England Conservatory where she studied composition with George Chadwick.[7] She graduated a year early with highest honors earning a Teacher's Diploma in piano and a Soloist's Diploma in organ studies.[8] Price Robinson notes that the coursework Price completed was equivalent to a Master's degree.[9]

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[4] Price, *Symphonies*, xvi.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Florence Price Robinson, notes on 3 x 5 index cards. Florence Price Papers (MC 988), series 1, box 1, folder 1, card #43. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

[7] Price, *Symphonies*, xix.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Florence Price Robinson, notes on 3 x 5 index cards. Florence Price Papers (MC 988), series 1, box 1, folder1. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

After finishing school, Price returned to Arkansas to teach piano and organ lessons.[10] After her father's death, she became head of Clark Atlanta University's music department in 1910.[11] In 1912, she left her job and returned to Little Rock to marry attorney Thomas Jewell Price.[12] During her second stint in Little Rock, Price maintained a private studio and gave birth to two children.[13] Though she gave up her university position, she still maintained interest in composition, and wrote piano teaching pieces to supplement her continued work as a piano teacher. Eventually, she experimented with larger compositional forms and took advantage of the growing list of foundation prizes for musical composition.[14] She continued educational pursuits through the late 1920s, and took multiple trips to Chicago Musical College to continue her studies in composition.[15] Owing to her husband's burgeoning law practice and the 1927 lynching of a middle-class black man in Little Rock, the Prices relocated to Chicago. The 1930s yielded Price's most well-known and eclectic pieces including the Wanamaker Prize-winning *Symphony in E minor* (1932-33) and *Piano Concerto in One Movement* (1934).[16] Price went on to pen over 300 compositions, including forty-four published songs.[17] She was the mentor to the talented pianist and composer Margaret Bonds, and served as a major presence in the National Association for Negro Musicians (NANM).[18] She was well-respected by her contemporary black artists.

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[10] Price, *Symphonies*, xx.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., xxi.

[13] Ibid., xxiii.

[14] Ibid., xxiii-xxiv

[15] Ibid., xxiv.

[16] Ibid., xxviii.

[17] James Greeson and Dale Carpenter, *The Caged Bird: The Life and music of Florence B. Price*, narrated by Julia Sampson (2015; Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), DVD.

My trip to the University of Arkansas Special Collections funded by the American Musicological Society Thomas Hampson Fund grant allowed me to determine that there are 56 unpublished song manuscripts held in the Price Papers and the Price Papers Addendum. Most of these manuscripts are fully intact and are performance copies.

[18] Price, *Symphonies*, xl.

For a more detailed biography of Florence Price, refer to Rae Linda Brown's biographical sketch found at the beginning of her new scores of *Symphonies 1* and *3*. Scholars of Price are indebted to the biographical research conducted by Brown at the University of Arkansas's Archives of Price's letters, autograph scores, and compositional sketches.

She and William Grant Still were well acquainted, since they were both from Little Rock, AR, and she wrote "My Soul's Been Anchored in de Lord" and "Trouble Done Come My Way" for the great contralto Marian Anderson. Most notably, though, she was the first black woman to have a work played by a major orchestra. Her example shone as beacon to future black composers such as Undine Smith Moore, Margaret Bonds, Betty Jackson King, and others. Though Price died in 1953, her legacy lives on through the works of these black female composers. Price's résumé certainly inspires confidence in her abilities as a composer. Why is it, then, that her songs are so rarely performed today?

Navigating "New Negro" Aesthetics

Alain Locke's essay "The New Negro" is widely considered to be the fathering text of the Harlem and Chicago Renaissances.[19] The guiding principle of Locke's text is racial uplift by means of social capital. This social capital is gained by blacks making contributions to American art, culture, and commerce at a level comparable (or exceeding) their white counterparts. In *The Negro and His Music* Locke posits that Negro Spirituals must be the basis for successful black contributions to classical music. Since Locke was not trained as a music theorist, his aesthetic values are limited to direct quotations of the spirituals. Locke was not alone in his hypothesis, though. For instance, in "The Souls of Black Folk," W.E.B. Du Bois spends an entire chapter describing the power of what he calls the "Sorrow Songs."[20] Locke had this to say about New Negro music:

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[19] Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music and Negro Art: Past and Present* (New York: Arno Press, 1969).

Locke's *The Negro and His Music* is the major aesthetic text regarding music of the Negro Renaissance. Though Locke was not a music scholar, he was a prolific philosopher and cultural critic. He was the first African American to earn a PhD from Harvard University, and taught at Howard University for most of his life.

[20] W.E.B. Du Bois, "XIV. The Sorrow Songs. Du Bois, W. E. B. 1903. The Souls of Black Folk," http://www.bartleby.com/114/14.html.

> Folk song is a hardy growth; art music, a sensitive one. As Negro music progresses to its maturer [sic] stages, it will require more sun and air than rain and sub-soil. Without favorable nurture and appreciation [sic] it can never attain full stature and flowerage.
> Cultural opportunity and appreciation are just what for the moment the Negro musician critically needs, especially the creative musician, and to the degree that these are extended, the future development of Negro music will be possible, and only to that extent.
> Certain it is, that with proper encouragement and sober cultivation, Negro music can enrich both our national and our racial culture. We have seen how it already has.[21]

As noble as Locke's intentions may have been, they bear the odor of class privilege, and the entire text ignores jazz, blues, and ragtime as a tool for racial uplift. The concert spirituals of Burleigh are certainly more attractive to the black elites of the New Negro period, but what of the blue-collar blacks of Harlem and Chicago? Locke was not completely pleased with Price's *Symphony in E minor,* because it did not directly quote Negro Spirituals.

> Mrs. Price's work vindicates the Negro composer's right, at choice, to go up to Parnassus by the broad high road of classicism rather than the narrower, more hazardous but often more rewarding path of racialism. At the pinnacle, the paths converge and the attainment becomes in the last analysis, neither racial nor national, but universal music.[22]

Price's musical language in the *Symphony* incorporated juba dance rhythms, African drumming, and extended syncopation. Price's symphonies—a Eurocentric form which embodies the ideals of the European Enlightenment Era—are steeped in her Afrocentric musical references. Price's fusion of both aesthetic fields embodies a more nuanced understanding of racial uplift. In fact, Price said "It seems to me to be no more impossible to conceive of Negroid music devoid of the spiritualistic theme on the one hand than strongly syncopated rhythms of the juba on the other."[23]

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[21] Locke, 140.

[22] Ibid., 114.

[23] Letter from Price to Koussevitsky as cited in Rae Linda Brown, "William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Dawson: Echoes of the Harlem Renaissance," in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays*, by Samuel A. Floyd (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 82.

Price's 1940 letter to Koussevitzky was one in a series of letters written to prominent conductors of the day. It is believed that Price desired to have a premiere at Boston Symphony, the city of her alma mater. This dream was unfortunately never realized.

Price attempted to bridge the divisions of class that actually led to the movement's demise in the 1930s.[24]

The Harlem Renaissance began to wane in the 1930s, but the Chicago Renaissance lasted from the 1930s to the 1950s.[25] The critical difference in this movement was the influence of the Great Migration on the expansion of musical forms in Chicago. The influx of freed slaves seeking the security of the industrial workforce in the northern metropolises in the late 1800s led to a comingling of southern and northern musical styles, especially in the more easily accessible Chicago area. The country blues and slave songs more peacefully existed side-by-side in Chicago Renaissance culture than in the Harlem Renaissance. Moreover, the Chicago flowering was marked by extensive community organizing and arts patronage spearheaded primarily by black female philanthropists and public-school teachers. Price's music reflects high and low musics and similarly engages with both classes of black folk. My analysis of "Sympathy" will exemplify her ability to paint a broader picture of the black musical experience during the New Negro Movement.

The New Negro movement espoused a clear narrative of the place of the Negro woman. One author said, "Alain Locke's archetype appears to be not only decidedly male, but also exceedingly optimistic."[26] In Du Bois's "The Damnation of Women," he cited great female artists and the importance of suffrage, but ended with a re-emphasis of motherhood as a primary role.[27] Another example of such prescriptive rhetoric toward women manifested as an article in *The Messenger* charging black women to "create and keep alive in the breast of black men, a holy and consuming passion to break with slave traditions of the past."[28]

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[24] Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 133.

[25] A discussion of the full history of the Negro Renaissance is beyond the scope of this chapter. For more information on the Chicago and Harlem Renaissances, read *The Black Chicago Renaissance* edited by Darlene Clark Hines and John McCluskey, Jr. The volume is a collection of essays by noted black studies scholars that explores the distinguishing characteristics of the Chicago Renaissance in comparison to the Harlem Renaissance.

[26] Jennifer Wilks, "Black Modernism in Retrospect: Dorothy West's New (Negro) Woman," in *Race, Gender, and Comparative Black Modernism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 146.

[27] Ibid., 148.

[28] Ibid., 150.

These three narratives relegate black women to the role of a "race woman" who must put her innovation aside for the betterment of black men. The narrative of the New Negro requested silence and patience from women, and further centered black men as the center of the black family unit. The reasoning was that if black men were lifted from the oppressive psychology of slavery, their women and children would follow. The Negro Renaissance philosophers carried a sense that if the talented and privileged upper classes proved themselves equal to whites, the resulting cultural capital would trickle down to lower-class blacks. The rhetoric of the time period explains much of Locke's mixed reaction to Price's symphony. In relation to the New Negro movement, Price cannot be called a major leader. She was tethered by her status as a woman and her taste for a more nuanced style of composition than the male New Negro aesthetic called for. Her compositional style embodies a black nationalistic aesthetic which embraces black folk music and brings it into dialogue with Western art music. Rae Linda Brown expressed this sentiment in her research on Florence Price's orchestral music. She said, "Her [Price's] particular style demonstrates that an African American composer could transform received musical forms yet articulate a unique American artistic and cultural self."[29] Running parallel to movements within the black intellectual community was an equally compelling dialogue about art song.

Art Song Developments 20th-Century America

The aesthetic identity of art song of the early-mid 1900s was expressed in two distinctive strains: Americanism and traditionalism.[30] The "two-strain" theory was posited by Friedberg and Fisher in reference to "traditionalists" vs. "Americanists." Price was included as an "Americanist," but the author characterizes her style as traditional.

Americanists such as Price, William Grant Still, and Arthur Farwell included Anglo-American folk music, Spirituals, and Native American melodies in their songs. Adversely, George Chadwick and Charles Griffes fell into the traditionalist camp.

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[29] Rae Linda Brown, 1986. "The Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888-1953)," in *Black American Music Symposium: August 9—August 15, 1985, Ann Arbor, 1985,* 58-62 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan), 58.

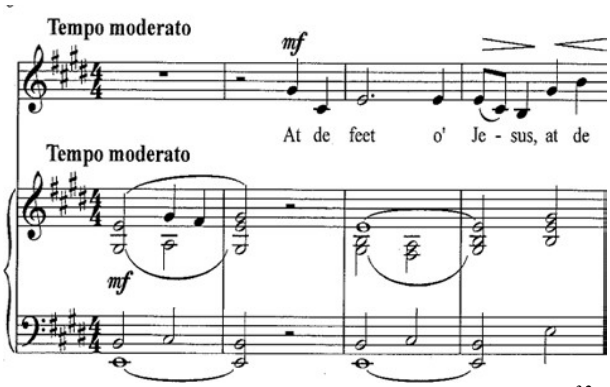
[30] Friedberg, 49.

George Chadwick's education in Leipzig with Rheinberger grounded him in a largely Brahmsian harmonic sensibility. Griffes heavily borrowed from French Impressionists with his languid piano lines. As a pupil of George Chadwick, Florence Price undoubtedly benefitted from extensive counterpoint and orchestration exercises rooted in a European systematic approach to musical composition.

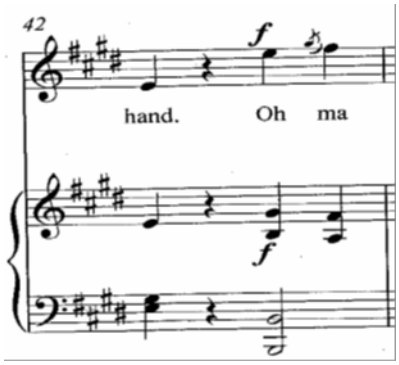
Douglas Moore, Ernst Bacon, Still, Price, and other song composers were striving to create and define a distinctly American sound in art song. The educational options were limited mostly to teachers educated abroad in Germany or France, and these composers took their formal education and attempted to infuse it with new techniques. These techniques ranged from the borrowing of pentatonic melodies in Farwell's *Native American Songs*, to the concert setting of "My Soul's Been Anchored in da Lord" by Price.

Black composers of the time fell into the "black nationalist" school of composition. This school is thought to be spearheaded by Harry Burleigh's success in concert spiritual arranging during the 1910s and 20s. His spiritual settings became so popular that they quickly became set pieces for recital encores and final groups. Spirituals had made their way into the concert hall; thus, black composers had made their first foray into racial uplift of the spirituals. To this day, the spiritual settings of Burleigh are performed with far more frequency than his art songs. The natural next step in a black nationalist lineage was the use of spiritual melodies as motivic material as in Still's *Afro-American Symphony* (1930). Price experimented further with creating "pseudo-spirituals" such as "Feet o' Jesus" with text by Langston Hughes. Price sets Hughes's dialect poem with an equally vernacular music complete with pentatonic melodies and Gospel-inflected grace notes (see Examples 1.1 and 1.2). As Bethany Jo Smith expressed this sentiment, saying, "The black art song is neither completely assimilated into white America, nor is it solely rooted in African tradition. Instead it is an art form drawing from both American and African literary, musical, cultural, and social traditions."[31]

[31] Bethany Jo Smith, "Song to the Dark Virgin: Race and Gender in Five Art Songs of Florence B. Price," (master's thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2007), in Ohio Link Electronic Theses and Dissertations, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ucin1186770755, 40.



Example 1.1: "Feet o' Jesus" Pentatonic Theme[32]



Example 1.2: "Feet o' Jesus" Gospel (la-sol) Grace Note[33]

Price continued the black nationalist agenda by setting prominent black poets like Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, and James Weldon Johnson. Smith labels Price as a "traditionalist," by virtue of her expressive melodies, use of chromaticism within a diatonic framework, and use of text painting.[34] Additionally, she showed compositional variety that shifted appropriately with the expressive mode of the text. In "Hold Fast to Dreams," for example, Price begins with a piano prelude reminiscent of church organ music in a spry D-major. The setting juxtaposes a nearly saccharine accompaniment to "Hold fast to dreams" with a sudden Debussy-like diminished sequence on "for if dreams die" (see Examples 1.3 and 1.4). Her ability to bring such adverse musical topics into a cohesive musical whole is the treasure of Price's art song style. This ability to link vernacular and European musical traditions is mirrored in the works of Ives, and later with Copland's *Old American Songs*.

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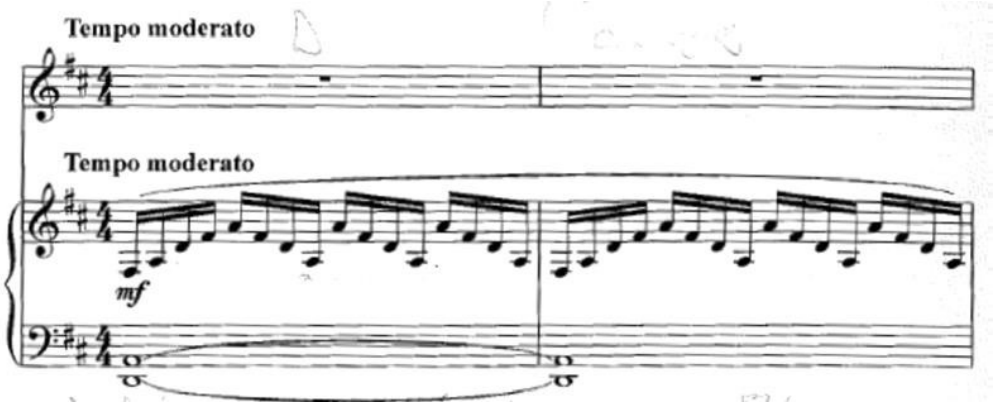
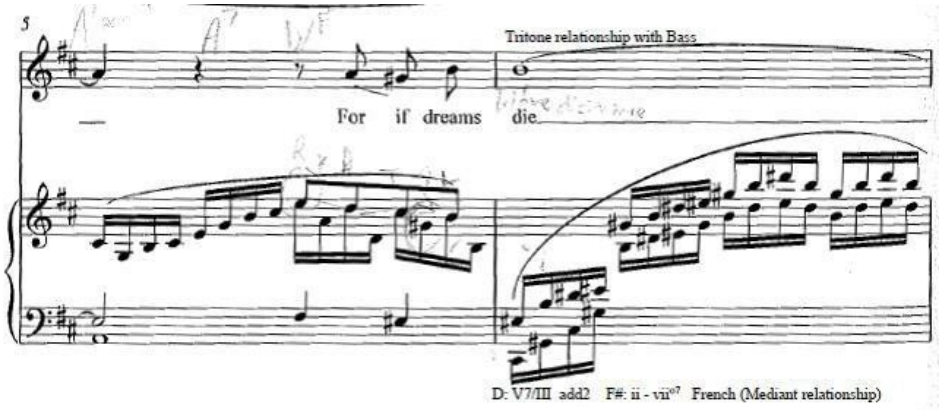
[32] Price, *44 Art Songs*, 30.
[33] Ibid., 48.
[34] Smith, 44.

Without the adventurous experiments of composers like Price, it is hard to imagine the distinctly "American" sound of Copland.



Example 1.3: "Hold Fast to Dreams" Organ-like Accompaniment[35]



Example 1.4: "Hold Fast to Dreams" Mediant Sequence with Tritone Dissonance[36]

The Patchwork Influences of Price: A Stylistic Exploration

Aldrich Adkins posited a theory of black art song stylistic periods by musical sophistication and political agenda.[37] The first period (1900-34) songs were simplistic, and second period songs (1934-49) embodied "protest and vindication," and composers began to incorporate black musical idioms in an economical and sophisticated fashion.[38] Adkins's proposal is intriguing as it links compositional style to the political agendas of the time.

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 32.

[37] Aldrich Wendell Adkins, "The Development of the Black Art Song" (D.M.A. dissertation, University of Texas, 1971), 3, quoted in Smith, 43.

[38] Ibid.

He assigns the following characteristics to early 20th-Century black art song:

1. Misplaced rhythmic accent or extended syncopation
2. Use of a minor scale with a raised or omitted sixth scale degree
3. Modality or pentatonicism[39]
4. Flatted third or seventh scale degrees
5. Use of a major scale with a flatted seventh scale degree
6. Overlapped antiphony
7. Repetitious melody and rhythm[40]

These characteristics are exhibited in Price's art songs and spiritual settings alongside Western canonical structures like sonata principle. The style characteristics listed above reflect a general troping of Eurological forms that reflects the inherent identity of being black in a white-dominated society. Price's various musical influences afforded her a compositional flexibility that allowed her to occupy white and black space effectively.

Musical "Africanisms:" Black Rhetoric in Music

Of the extensive list provided by Adkins, perhaps the most representative embodiments can be found in rhythm or drumming and black preaching. These cultural artifacts of the black community readily express the spiritual and philosophical undertones of black music.

Rhythm: The Ever-Beating Drum

An exploration of black musical style is impossible without reference to the drum. Drumming's significance as a rhetorical device is rooted in African storytelling and the ring shout. Pervasive syncopation as a rhythmic device is a consistent reference to Price's black roots. Other composers' failure to tap in to this powerful spiritual device garnered negative feedback from white audiences. Olin Downes of the *New York Times* once criticized Nathaniel Dett's choir, saying, "Some negro spirituals are wildly dramatic.

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[39] The use of the pentatonic scale is not unique to black folk music but appears in Appalachian folk tunes as well. However, the scale is ubiquitous throughout Negro Spirituals and the art song repertory of Price. The pentatonic scale offers a flexible harmonic field where leading tones can catapult the harmony across the circle of fifths. The simplicity and flexibility of the pentatonic scale allowed Price to apply late Romantic and Impressionistic harmonic extensions without creating ineffective dissonances.

[40] Adkins, 90-92, quoted in Smith, 45.

Often, they have rhythms and phrase lengths which cut entirely free from white traditions. Could not certain of the harmonizations have been less formal, more exotic?"[41] Samuel Floyd theorized that the New Negro Renaissance failed to tap into the mythological lifeblood of Africanism, because it "expected ideology to replace myth."[42] There is an inherent authenticity in Price's musical language that is deeply rooted in an African rhythmic sensibility. Anthropologist and author Zora Neale Hurston expressed the importance of "dance possible" rhythms to an authentic Negro aesthetic.[43] Price incorporated the juba dance in her piano piece of the same title and clung to a pervasive sense of rhythmic energy in her spiritual settings. In this way, Price engaged with the vernacular music of the day—blues, jazz, and gospel—which relied on syncopation as an emotional and spiritual tool.

Black Preaching—Black Rhetoric

Cornel West once said "I would suggest that there are two organic intellectual traditions in Afro-American life: The Black Christian Tradition of Preaching and The Black Musical Tradition of Performance."[44] Since black knowledge historically exists within an oral tradition, this assertion is compelling. Black preaching provides a lens into an important aspect of a black aesthetic—repetition. As Price's setting of "Song to the Dark Virgin" shows, she took liberties with repeating certain fragments of text for affect. Just as the iconic refrain "I have a dream" was repeated at key moments in Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech, black artists have used repetition as a powerful rhetorical device.

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[41] Jon Michael Spencer, *Re-searching Black Music* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 93.

Spencer calls for a "theomusicology" that acknowledges the inextricable spiritual connotations of black music interpretation. His framework is one that is integrative of a culture, religion, and societal constructs within the black community.

[42] Floyd, 133.

Floyd posits that the "New Negro" failed to meet the requisites of modernity. Its appeal to black aristocracy kept it from garnering widespread and long-lasting appeal.

[43] Judith Tick and Paul E. Beaudoin, "Zora Neale Hurston on 'Spirituals and Neo- Spirituals'" in *Music in the USA: A Documentary Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 508.

[44] Cornel West, "The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual," *Cultural Critique*, no. 1 (1985), 114.

From Church to Conservatory: Eurocentric Influence

Formative Years in the African American Presbyterian Church

As a girl, Price was exposed to classical music not only through community teachers, but through the Presbyterian Church. In order to remain in fellowship with the white dominated Presbyterian Church, Black Presbyterians were not allowed to veer from the highly Germanic Presbyterian hymnals. Black children were encouraged to perform and study classical music. In fact, many impressive concerts and recitals grew from this tradition.

> In 1841, The First African Presbyterian Church performed Haydn's oratorio Creation with a 55-piece black populated orchestra and 150 black voices. According to the Presbyterian Historical Society, concerts of this magnitude were encouraged by governing presbyteries of black Presbyterian churches.[45]

Her early exposure to classical music and hymnody shows in her pervasive use of pedal tones and organ-like accompaniment patterns. Undoubtedly, she developed her ear for melody and lyricism from hearing sophisticated vocal concerts such as ones by singer Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield ("The Black Swan").

Conservatory Education

Price's studies with George Chadwick are evident in her adherence to mostly symmetrical formal structures. One sees a pervasive use of Exposition (tonic and dominant relationships) →Development (relative minor and exploration of distant keys) →Recapitulation (tonic with a coda) formal structure in her songs, which is an adapted sonata principle within the small-scale form of song composition. Within Development sections, she develops motivic materials in more distant keys, but always arrives back at tonic. Chadwick shows a similar penchant in his symphonic writing and was chided for elaborating on too many motives.

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[45] Shana Thomas Mashego, "Music from the Soul of Woman: The Influence of the African American Presbyterian and Methodist Traditions on the Classical Compositions of Florence Price and Dorothy Rudd Moore." (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 2010), in The University of Arizona Libraries UA Campus Repository, http://arizona.openrepository.com/arizona/bitstream/10150/193978/1/azu_etd_11355_sip1_m.pdf, 17.

He was also a well-trained organist and insisted on a strong knowledge of counterpoint and harmonic convention in his groundbreaking theory textbook.[46] Price benefitted from one-on-one work with Chadwick, because she was more than likely encouraged to strive for invention within a structural framework. The songs exhibit a sense of economy and structure juxtaposed with invention. When listening to settings of Dunbar and Hughes, a clear influence of jazz (or French Impressionism) is evident.[47] Her use of chord extensions and tritone substitution makes reference to the experiments of Debussy and Milhaud. Milhaud's music was quite popular during her time in conservatory and was considered the "new music" of the time. One must also wonder if her use of extended chords and polychords are influenced by Gershwin or Messiaen. There are no documented interactions with these composers, but Price's harmonic references are certainly far-reaching.

"The Caged Bird:" An Analysis

An appropriate way to explore Price's style is to look at an exemplary song that exhibits her various musical influences (see Appendix A for a full score of "Sympathy"). From both the perspective of a self-referential narrative and as a compositional exercise, "Sympathy" is a treasure trove of musical materials.

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[46] G. W. Chadwick, *Harmony: A Course of Study* (Boston: B. F. Wood Music, 1925).

Chadwick revolutionized the idea of the American conservatory environment and divorced it from a European model. As dean and professor of composition at New England Conservatory, he wrote *Harmony* to reflect the composition exercises taught in his courses.

[47] Carol Ritter, "Cultural Influence of Organ Music Composed by African American Women," *College Music Symposium* 55 (2015): http://symposium.music.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=10872:cultural- influences-of-organ-music-composed-by-african-american-women&Itemid=124.

Carol Ritter's article on the organ music of Price (and other black female composers) quotes several sources referencing Price's association with late Romantic harmony and jazz. She asserts, **"**Jazz harmonies and rhythms were also incorporated into many of her works."

The Text

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals –
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting –
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore, –
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings –
I know why the caged bird sings![48]

Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Sympathy" was published in *Lyrics of the Hearthside* in 1899, and embodies Dunbar's lyrical style. In these poems, Dunbar attempted to show that he could employ sophisticated literary devices in his poetry just as white poets could. Unfortunately, Dunbar's poems written in dialect afforded him more widespread appreciation during his life. The poem portrays imagery of a caged bird who longs to be free. The poem is highly descriptive of natural beauty—a prominent feature of Victorian poetry. However, rich symbolism lies below the surface of the text:

[48] Paul Laurence Dunbar, as cited in "Paul Laurence Dunbar's Sympathy: A Study Guide," Cummings Study Guide, http://cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides4/Sympathy.html.

> Signifyin(g) combines circumlocution and double-speak that is often used to avoid directly stating controversial words and instead substitutes more socially "appropriate" speech. Black writers often used euphemism to address topics such as slavery and lynching in their works through using words such as trapped, caged, burning, aflame, etc., as a way to discuss these themes without the explicit comprehension of whites. Binary oppositions were also used as a way to express racial difference…[49]

Dunbar's poem is about oppression and freedom, as well as pain and hope. In the first stanza, the speaker asserts their knowledge of "what the caged bird feels" as it looks out into the open air of welcoming springtime. Stanza 2 brings darker imagery of blood, pain, and scars. The focus of the poem switches from the joy of the outside world, to the turmoil of "caged-ness." The second stanza calls the listener to understand "why the caged bird beats his wing." This piece of text verbalizes the plight of blacks trying to overcome the oppression that strangles them. At the end of the second stanza, we know that caged bird has not given up yet. Finally, in the third stanza the speaker understands "why the caged bird sings." Though the bird is beaten and bruised, the glimmer of hope that lies within its battered breast calls out a lyrical prayer. This is the prayer of hope that has kept blacks on the path of perseverance since slavery—the hope of faith in God.

The poem's rhyme scheme is abaabcc, and the meter is iambic tetrameter. The regular rhyme pattern lends the poem to a lyrical verse-refrain structure. Price groups every two lines with the same melodic material, and leaves the final line as a refrain. Price's musical setting of the text expresses the idea of "caged-ness" and of a sterling hope to be found in faith.

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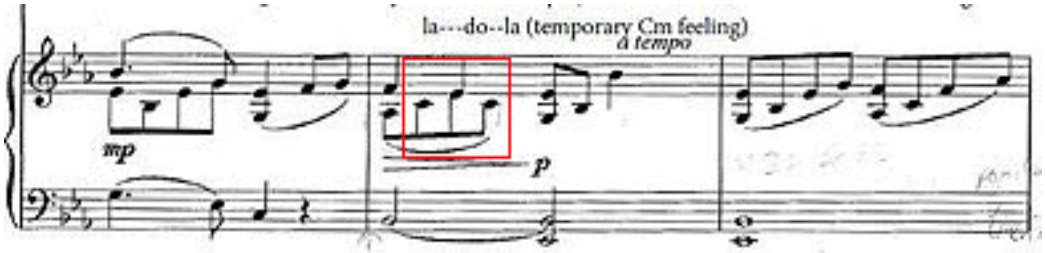
[49] Smith, 69.

Smith draws from Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s Signifying Monkey. Gates posits the theory that the signifyin(g) trickster trope can be used as a method of African American literary criticism. The idea of trickster characters is rooted in African storytelling traditions in which the trickster uses doublespeak to communicate important morals.

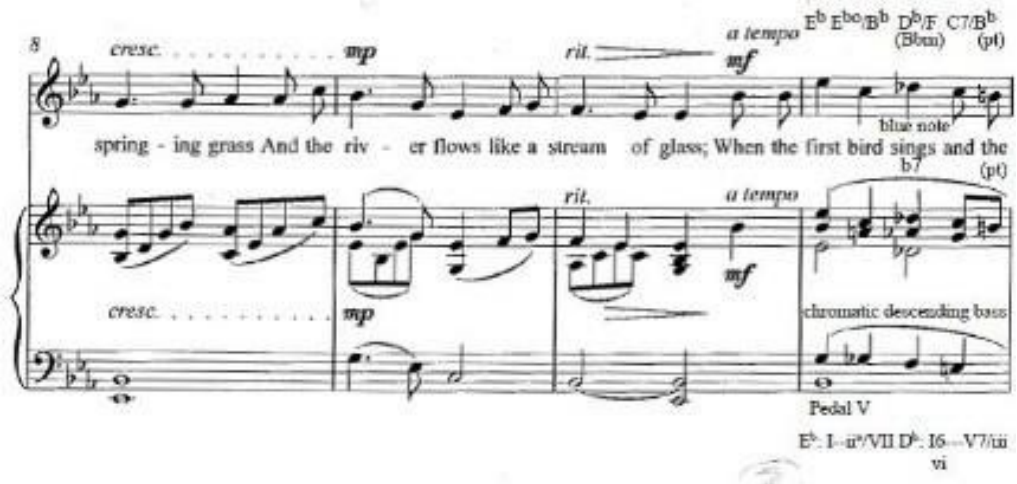
The Music

"Sympathy" is composed in ternary form, with the B section centered in the relative minor key of C-minor. The A section begins with an organ-like prelude with pedal tones in the left hand.

This organ accompaniment prevails through the A-section. The harmonic progression is I6-ii7-IV6/4-I-vi-V4/2(add 9)-I for both parallel periods. The RH "la—do" motive in m.6 and m.10 is reminiscent of the modal quality of Spirituals (see Example 1.5). This brief emphasis of C-minor in the RH provides a foreshadowing of the pain to come in the B-section. That motive is the first vestige of black music in an otherwise Eurological framework.



Example 1.5: "Sympathy"—La-Do Motive (mm. 5—7)[50]

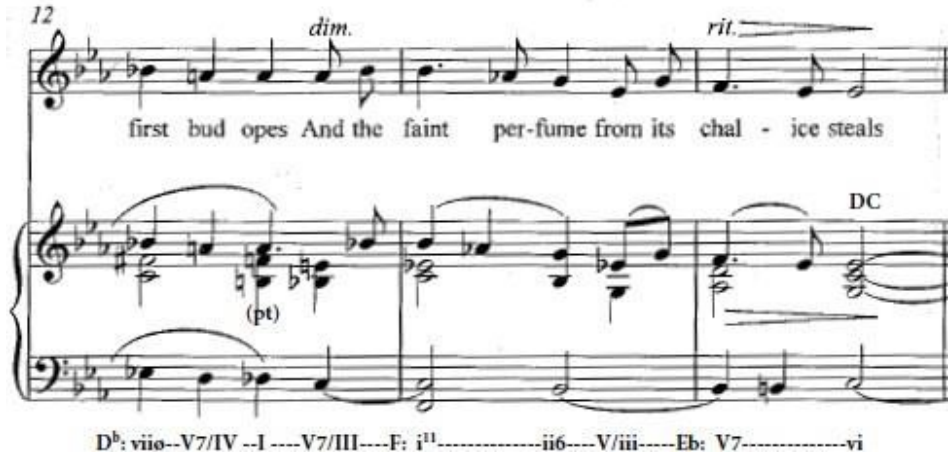


Example 1.6: "Sympathy"—Blue Notes and Chromatic Descent (mm. 8—11)[51]

At "When the first bird sings," the melody descends chromatically with "blue note" accentuations (see Example 1.6). The chromatically descending bass line leads us to a C-minor deceptive cadence on "steals."

[50] Price, *44 Art Songs*, 116.
[51] Ibid.

Price employs complex diminished and other predominant harmonies to lead the listener to the next phrase (see Example 1.7).

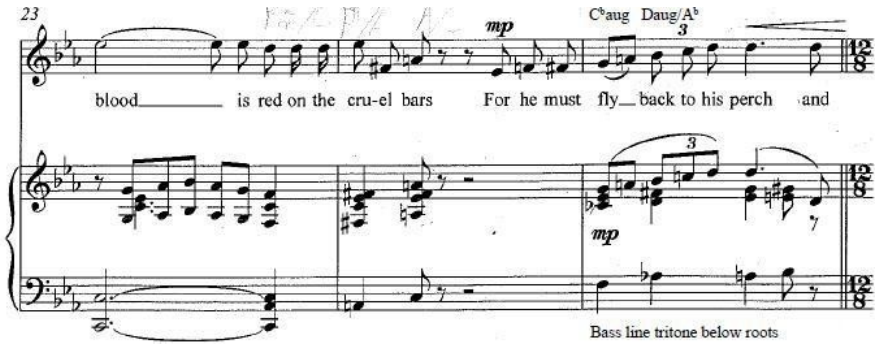


Example 1.7: "Sympathy"—Harmonic Progression to Deceptive Cadence (m.m.12—14)[52]

"I know what the caged bird feels" is accompanied by I6-IV-I6-ii7-I6/4 and the final phrase cadences on "feels." Rhetorically, the subject's hopes (accompanied by E-flat major) are dashed by the downward spiral brought on by their blackness expressed with the "blue notes" of the "When the first bird sings" phrase. Moreover, the melodic line steadily rises until the chromatic descent.

Price sets the B-section in C-minor, then transitions the meter from simple 4/4 to complex duple (12/8 time). "Blood is red on the cruel bars" is accompanied by i-iv-vii /V-vii°/VII, a risqué harmonic progression for the time period. Price utilizes the flexible nature of diminished and augmented sonorities to catapult the harmony across the circle of fifths. The harmonic zenith of the piece occurs on "For he must fly back to his perch and cling." Here, Price progresses C-flat augmented to D augmented while maintaining a bass line that is a tritone below the root (see Example 1.8)!

[52] Ibid., 117.



Example 1.8: "Sympathy"—Tritone and Augmented Dissonances (mm. 23—25)[53]

Price uses a polychord of D augmented and A-flat major on "back to his perch" The experimental harmony here looks forward to Partch and Cowell later in the century. The thorny harmony and melody reflect the wounded nature of the bird, as well as embody the oppressive cage. Price employs text painting with an octave leap on "and cling," to show the bird flying back to his perch.

The B section continues with a general harmonic feeling of B diminished/D minor. The melody is interesting, because it starts reinforcing D until "fain" where it begins to reinforce a feeling of E-major which then leads to C-major on "a swing." After that point, the melody incorporates more leaps of a fifth, which are topically reflective of dramatic or heroic sentiments. It is as if in the midst of turmoil, the subject finds organization and resolve. In m. 31, the melody begins to ascend in opposition to mm. 10-12 and arrives at the repeat of A.

"Sympathy" exhibits the full range of compositional techniques available to Florence Price. The experimental B-section is rhetorically justified by the hopeful conventions of both A sections. The return maintains much of the material of A, but includes a coda which highlights the desperate hope of the bird by setting the final "I know" on a sustained G5. The piece ends in the home key, and a sense of symmetry is accomplished. Price exemplifies the sentiments of her teacher George Chadwick:

[53] Ibid., 118.

> If, as has been repeatedly stated, the rules forbidding consecutive fifths, octaves, and augmented seconds and false relations, are broken with impunity or even ignored altogether by modern composers, the question arises, why were these rules ever promulgated? To this we may answer, if the effect justifies the means, any rule may be disregarded…They should stimulate his sense of beauty, both of sound and design, while increasing his power of expression and his realization of the significance of harmonic combinations.[54]

Just as Dunbar drew from European literary conventions and applied a signifyin(g) sensibility, Price drew from her musical training and fused it with her own cultural references. The rhetorical skill of Dunbar is magnified by the harmonic and melodic vision of Price.

Conclusion: Uncaging Black Female Composers

Florence B. Price exemplifies the plight and impressive perseverance of black female composers. Her songs have been historically neglected by the classical canon, perhaps because of their specificity to her time and milieu. However, the songs can be appreciated for their ingenuity, sensitivity, and pianistic intrigue. Moreover, the songs can be situated in a rich lineage of black nationalistic art song. Price presented the fusion of black and European musical materials, while looking forward to the establishment of a truly "American" sound. Composers such as Margaret Bonds, Undine Smith Moore, Adolphus Hailstork, and even Copland owe much of their success and universal appeal to the groundbreaking accomplishments of Florence Price. May we continue to free black female composers from the cages of Eurocentric analytic paradigms. Rather, we must seek out frameworks that allow appreciation for the strength and creativity of these exemplary women.

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[54] Chadwick, 259-260.

Chapter Two: Viewing the Art Songs of Florence Price through a Womanist Lens

> *And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man–when I could get it–and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?*[1]

As referenced in Chapter 1, the problem of the black woman composer is doubly complicated by issues of race and gender that interlock into a system of oppression unique to the black female experience. One entry point for a decolonized view of Florence Price's art songs is through investigating the historic trajectory of black feminist thought, and applying this knowledge to a gendered narrative analysis. This analysis would provide insight into female embodiment, the musical-textual construction of this embodiment, and would undergird our understanding of formal organization with an integral understanding of the lived experiences of the composer and poet.

In this chapter, we will explore what Naomi André calls "an engaged analysis" of Price's "The Washerwoman."[2] In order to discuss these pieces in light of contemporary critical thought, it is necessary to review the oft-overlooked canon of black feminist thought that germinated in the late 1800s and found its apogee during the Negro Renaissance.

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[1] From "Ain't I A Woman Speech" as recounted by Frances Gage http://sojournertruthmemorial.org/sojourner-truth/her-words/

[2] Dr. André most recently spoke about her methodology in her talk "Embodying Race, Gender, and Performance on Stage" delivered during a 2017 AMS Conference paper session entitled "Voicing Blackness, from Reconstruction to the Era of Black Lives Matter." Her method refuses to see the black body as a neutral canvas; rather, she seeks to see how performers and both musical and sociological narratives play out on the operatic stage. See also her edition of collected essays *Blackness in Opera*.

Towards Centering Black Women in Feminist Musicology

Feminist scholar bell hooks notes in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* that oftentimes the work of black women was overlooked in historical overviews of feminist history.[3] Though 1920-1950 is seen as the nadir of First Wave feminism before the advent of Second Wave feminism in the 1960s, this overlooks the expansive work of black feminists like Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Claudia Jones, Elise McDougald and many others.[4] Their sophisticated treatises responded to the unique problems of black women in their time, and some were modern in the Marxist-Leninist call for socialism. Beverly Guy-Sheftall says in her introduction to *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*:

> While black feminism is not a monolithic, static ideology, and there is considerable diversity among African American feminists, certain premises are constant: 1) Black women experience a special kind of oppression and suffering in this country which is racist, sexist, and classist because of their dual racial and gender identity and their limited access to economic resources; 2) This "triple jeopardy" has meant that the problems, concerns and needs of black women are different in many ways from those of both white women and black men; 3) Black women must struggle for black liberation and gender equality simultaneously; 4) There is no inherent contradiction in the struggle to eradicate sexism and racism as well as the other "isms" which plague the human community, such as classism and heterosexism; 5) Black women's commitment to the liberation of blacks and women is profoundly rooted in their lived experience.[5]

Elise McDougald was a contemporary of Florence Price, and though there is no evidence of their interaction, McDougald expertly diagnoses the sociological plight of black women during the Negro Renaissance.

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[3] Beverly Guy Sheftall, *Words of Fire*, 270-282.

[4] Beverly Guy-Sheftall's book is an anthology of essays by black woman feminists and thinkers spanning from early Reconstruction to the writings of bell hooks and others in the 1970s and 80s. This book is a necessary primer for scholars interested in engaging with black feminist thought, and its extensive bibliography establishes a non-linear and diverse progression of this inquiry.

[5] Guy-Sheftall, 2.

Elise McDougald's article "The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation" appeared in Alain Locke's magazine *Survey Graphic* in 1925. After partially substantiating the claim that black women in Harlem were experiencing unprecedented freedom from the shackles of domesticity, she sets out to answer "What are her [the black woman's] problems? and How is she solving them?"[6] The first salient point she makes relates to representation—particularly the escape from fetishized archetypes like the Mammy and the Jezebel.[7] McDougald's ability to reflect on the problem of black female misrepresentation in minstrelsy and to link it to the psycho-sociological distresses facing black women is poignant in its eloquence. She then moves on to categorize black female urban life into four categories:

> First, comes a very small leisure group—the wives [sic: of wives] and daughters of men who are in business, in the professions and a few well-paid personal service occupations. Second, a most active and progressive group, the women in business and the professions. Third, the many women in the trades and industry. Fourth, a group weighty in numbers struggling on in domestic service, with an even less fortunate fringe of casual workers fluctuating with the economic temper of the times.[8]

McDougald's choice of categories serves the dual purpose of showing the varied socio-economic strata displayed by black women, and setting up an argument that engages with a feminism that accounts for the interlocking structures of race and class. The economic freedom afforded by the need for industrial workers during World War I had lit a spark within black women that freed them from domestic bondage to the hearth. She cites several social organizations, spearheaded by black women, including the Colored Branch of the YWCA, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and Utopia Club.

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[6] Ibid., 80.

[7] Ibid.

Scholars of black theatre and feminist authors have addressed this problem multiple times throughout history. In her book *Yearning*, bell hooks addresses issues of representation and spends a considerable amount of time discussing the divergent views on the aptness of *A Raisin in the Sun*. She particularly points out the generational divide concerning how African Americans should be portrayed in media. George C. Wolfe's *The Colored Museum* confronts these archetypes through parody. One only need survey the legacy of minstrelsy to see how these damaging stereotypes have played out in contemporary cinema.

[8] Ibid., 81.

These organizations organized concerted action to encourage black female education and upward social mobility. The author's portrayal of Harlem in 1925 is a varied economic landscape in which black women became increasingly self-determined and social action oriented. McDougald's most revealing statement speaks to the limited examples of militant activism among black women.

> In this matter of sex equality, Negro women have contributed few outstanding militants. Their feminist efforts are directed chiefly toward to the realization of the equality of the races, the sex struggle assuming a subordinate place.[9]

Thus, even as black women were breaking free from the bondage of the New Negro "race woman" rhetoric, their early activism was dedicated to anti-lynching campaigns. As is the sociological requisite of the matrilineal nature of the black family, black women must bear the burden of their men and wait for their day in the sun.

"The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation" exemplifies the double jeopardy that existing as a black woman during the New Negro Movement entailed. One should note that the themes of entrapment, futility, and labor are recurrent themes in black poetry and music centered on women.[10] Whereas the second category of women exemplifies the unprecedented freedoms of black women to enter the workforce (Price falls most neatly into this category), the fourth category women stand in the fray recalling antebellum struggles in new clothing. McDougald makes a cogent statement that encapsulates the psychological plight facing domestic workers:

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[9] Guy-Sheftall, 82.

[10] See "We Wear the Mask" by both Paul Laurence Dunbar and then adapted by Maya Angelou for a poignant look at the entrapment of identity. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* encapsulates the triple jeopardy of oppression in the main protagonist Pecola. Some literary critics have posited that her name is a portmanteau of pee, codependent, and the feminine article "la." Morrison shows the character's psychological collapse and entrapment by subtly changing the character's speech to become increasingly elementary.

> We find the Negro woman, figuratively, struck in the face daily by contempt from the world about her. Within her soul, she knows nothing of peace and happiness. Through it all, she is courageously standing erect, developing within herself the moral strength to rise above and conquer false attitudes...She is measuring up to the needs and demands of her family, community, and race, and radiating from Harlem a hope that is cherished by her sisters in less propitious circumstances throughout the land.[11]

Though progress had been made by 1925, McDougald knew that true healing of the scars of slavery and sexist oppression would occur within the mind.[12]

In later generations, black feminists such as bell hooks and Alice Walker developed an intellectual framework in which a black feminism must be filtered primarily through the lens of race and class division. Alice Walker coined this idea as "Womanism." Womanism as distinct from second wave or third wave feminism (marked by Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality), it posits the oppressive structure of racism as the locus point for further feminist discourse. This paradigm allows for a feminism that is no longer ignorant to the plight of racial minorities, and moreover holds white feminists to a higher ethical standard. It is this strain of feminism that is most interesting, for there has been a shocking absence of black female narratives in the history of musicology and theory scholarship. This present work attempts to address this tragic instance of invisibilia.

For generations, the field of musicology has put forth analyses and monographs that center a patriarchal and Eurocentric analytic paradigm. Susan McClary's groundbreaking work *Feminine Endings* set out to engage with questions of how gender and sexuality shaped musical activities during the Baroque period.[13]

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[11] Ibid., 83.

[12] A full review of the history of black feminist thought is beyond the scope of this paper. However, Guy-Sheftall's book charts this trajectory expertly.

[13] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, Reprint (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

Her initial work garnered outspoken umbrage from the predominantly white male musicological community—particularly those who viewed musical time as a neutral liminal space in which gender and sex did not play a part. Though the current field of musicology enlivened by engagement with cultural studies is indebted to her work, one recalls bell hooks's indignation at the absence of black female centered narratives. The concerns, needs, and embodied experiences of black women are startlingly absent from the larger body of musicological inquiry. The work of Eileen Southern, Rae Linda Brown, Naomi André, and others has paved the way for musicology influenced by feminism, critical race theory, and cultural studies. Rae Linda Brown's forthcoming posthumous biography of Florence Price has been tragically delayed by her unexpected passing, but promises to be a solid work of historiography. The works of biographers such as Brown have been the work of centering and unveiling black female luminaries through quality historiography. However, there is need for a more focused critical discourse that theorizes the sounding of black female oppression, while centering the black female body as musical topic. Moreover, further engagement with the philosophical treatises of black women would help to alleviate this neglect. Naomi André's recent presentations on sounding the black experience through opera have opened the door for analysis such as the Womanist readings encompassed by this manuscript. Bethany Jo Smith's analyses of Price's songs certainly influence the framework I employ.

Bethany Jo Smith's dissertation entitled *"Song to the Dark Virgin": Race and Gender in Five Art Songs of Florence B. Price* employs an analytic method that engages with African American literary criticism, feminist theory, and race theory to interpret the songs of Florence Price. She analyzes "The Heart of a Woman," "Songs to the Dark Virgin," "Night," and "Fantasy in Purple." Her quality scholarship has opened the door to a more engaged analysis. My work seeks to deepen this engagement, and to create narrative analyses with a focused critical lens. I also aim to explore songs by Price that have been overlooked.

An aspect that is somewhat lacking is an acknowledgment of how her harmonic treatment serves as a mechanism to dramatize or re-read the narrative material at hand.[14] An additional aim of this analytical method is to empower performers to boldly interpret these pieces, and to raise awareness about Price's lyrical ingenuity.

In light of the oft-overlooked intellectual writings of black women during the Negro Renaissance, I find it a necessary endeavor to deconstruct the musical-literary portrayals of black female life—particularly those composed by African American women. Doing so causes the listener to engage with the black female subject's own self-fashioning which in the words of bell hooks invokes a "counter-hegemony."[15] In hooks's *Feminist Thought: From Margins to Center*, she critiques and problematizes First Wave and Second Wave feminism (termed by the author as "white feminism") as a white women's movement that centers the narrative of the bourgeoisie. In reference to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique,* Hooks says:

> Specific problems and dilemmas of leisure-class white housewives were real concerns that merited consideration and change but they were not the pressing political concern of masses of women. Masses of women were concerned about economic survival, ethnic and racial discrimination, etc. When Friedan wrote The Feminine Mystique, more than one-third of all women were in the workforce.[16]

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[14] Bethany Jo Smith, *"Song to the Dark Virgin": Race and Gender in Five Art Songs of Florence B. Price*, (Master's thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2007), in Ohio Link Electronic Theses and Dissertations, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ucin1186770755.

Portia Maultsby and Mellonee Burnim's anthology *Issues in African American Music* contains articles on issues of gender and sexuality ranging from homosexuality in the black church (Alisha Lola Jones) to female voices in gospel music (Mellonee Burnim). Some other works worthy of consideration include Eileen Hayes's *Songs in Black and Lavender: Race, Sexual Politics, and Women's Music* and, co-edited with Linda F. Williams, *Black Women and Music: More Than the Blues*. The work of these women is promising for a more inclusive musicological future.

[15] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 20-21.

She refers to Cornel West's lecture "De-centering Europe: The Crisis of Contemporary Culture as a work of counter-hegemonic practice as it asserts a radical black subjectivity.

[16] Guy-Sheftall, 271.

bell hooks and Kimberlé Crenshaw call for an intersectional feminism that accounts for the interlocking hegemonic structures of race, class, and gender. In pursuit of decolonizing musical analysis, I apply an intersectional black feminist paradigm that accounts for the relationship of the subject to the male gaze. Price's previously unpublished song "The Washerwoman," represents a portrayal of black female subjectivity through the lens of a black woman who was profoundly aware of racial and gendered barriers to her success as a composer.

The Case of "The Washerwoman"

The text of "The Washerwoman" first appeared in James Weldon Johnson's anthology The Book of American Negro Poetry in 1922.[17] According to the Richard Heard, the poet Otto Leland Bohanon described his poem as "A Poetic Response to the Beauty & Endurance of Black Women."[18] Bohanon, in addition to his work as poet, also worked in the music profession in New York City.[19] Below, I have included the text in its entirety:

> A great swart cheek and the gleam of tears,
> The flutter of hopes and the shadow of fears,
> And all day long the rub and scrub
> With only a breath betwixt tub and tub.
> Fool! Thou hast toiled for fifty years
> And what hast thou now but thy dusty tears?
> In silence she rubbed . . .
> But her face I had seen,
> Where the light of her soul fell shining and clean.[20]

The text paints the picture of a black woman—a domestic worker—toiling day in and day out. Themes of futility and the oppressive qualities of time abide in this short yet poignant text.

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[17] James Weldon Johnson, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Otto Leland Bohanon, *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, ed. James Weldon Johnson (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 190.

[18] Florence B. Price, *44 Art Songs and Spirituals: Medium/High Voice*, ed. Richard Heard (Fayetteville, AR: ClarNan Editions, 2015), v.

[19] Johnson, 209.

[20] Ibid., 190.

Most notable are the subtle personification of the objects of her labor coupled with the de-personification of the woman. Bohanon writes of "dusty tears" and a "shining and clean" soul. In these statements, the subject is objectified—her tears becoming the tools of her trade—and the subject is synonymous with their societal function. The poem both invites empathy with the character and alienates the reader from their fallen state by speaking of the subject as a figurehead of domestic work. Undoubtedly, this narrative duality welcomes myriad approaches to interpretation and text setting. The regular rhyme scheme of aabbaacc (echoing rondo musical form and therefore the realm of dance) welcomes a lyrical treatment, and the mix of pathos ("Silently she scrubbed...but her face I had seen") and anger ("Fool! Thou hast toiled for fifty years") presents compelling dramatic possibilities. A Womanist reading invites the question of the nature of the onlooker. The more obvious choice of a male gaze invites a critique of the unsympathetic patriarchy and the anger of the speaker. However, the supposition of a female speaker reframes the angered outburst as a statement of anger not at the woman, but at the futility of the situation.

If the listener is to believe Alice Walker's assertion that Womanists love women (whether sexually or otherwise), then they must assume a female speaker's anger is that of a mother disappointed in a prodigal daughter.[21] With this reading, the Washerwoman is then centered as the figurehead of the stunted and racially disaffected white feminists of Price's time. These women were not Womanists, and from their bourgeois lens were only able to see a domestic worker as racially inferior first and a woman second. A Womanist reader not only feels sympathy for the monotonous life of domestic workers as shown in McDougald's essay, but she sees an iteration of her own femininity.

Florence Price paints a dramatic landscape of the character, using harmonic invention and melodic intrigue to take the listener on an auditory journey.

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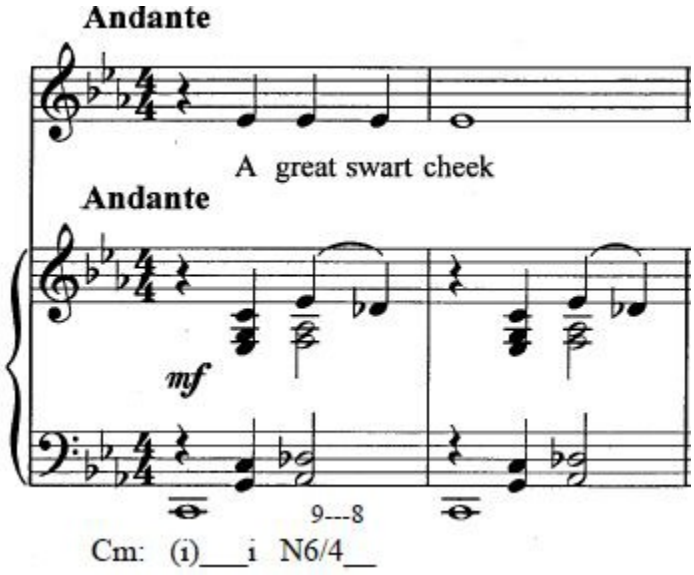
[21] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1983), xii.

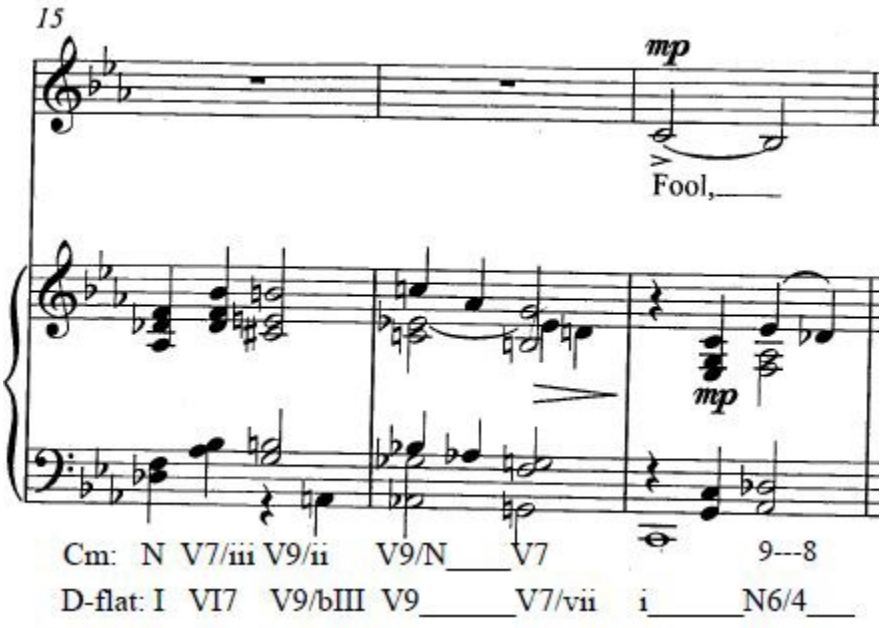
As the piece opens, Price introduces what I will call the washing motive in m. 1 (see Example 2.1).



Example 2.1: "The Washerwoman" (mm. 1—2)[22]

This motoric motive within the harmonic landscape of C Phrygian acts in a similar way to Gretchen's spinning wheel in Schubert's "Gretchen am Spinnrade." The solitary low C followed by stacked Neapolitan sonorities invoke the image of picking up a piece of clothing and running it over a washboard specifically the rocking motion of the subject on the ground or in a chair. The Neapolitan chords are in second inversion and, to add the harmonic instability, the chord does not resolve to a C-minor triad. Rather, the motive restarts with the solitary low C in the bass clef. This lack of linear harmonic development would seem uncouth and non-inventive from the Eurocentric analytic paradigm that puts primacy on motivic variation and development. However, the Afrocentric preference of repetition suggests that this repetition is meant to invoke the spirit of the place at hand and the emotional intent heightens with each repetition.

[22] Heard, 140.



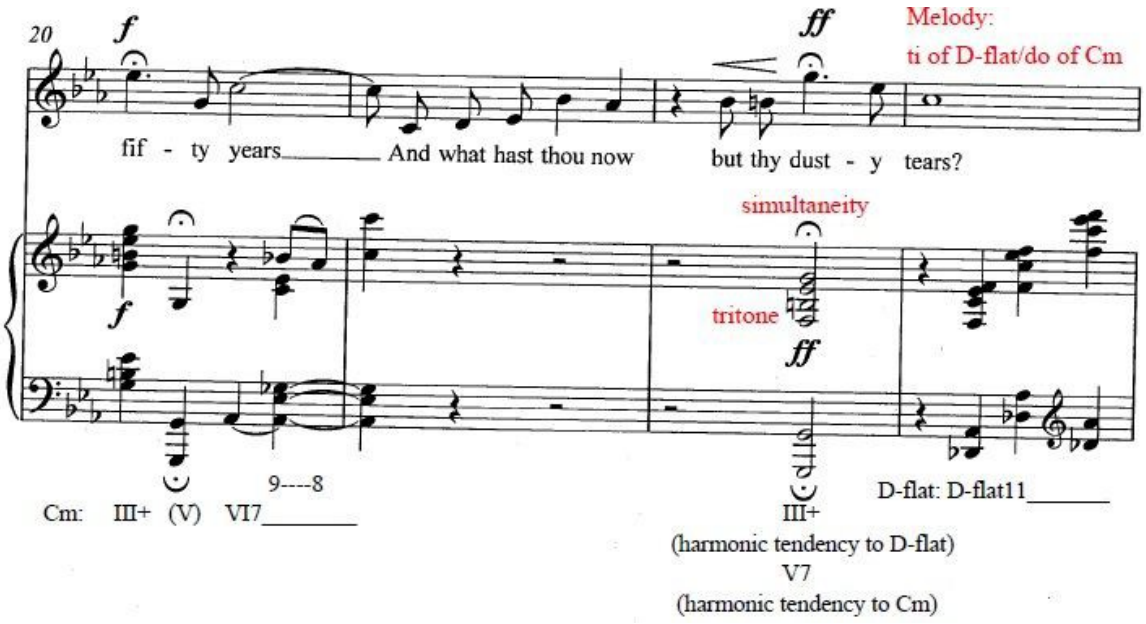
Example 2.2: "The Washerwoman" (mm. 15—18)[23]

The limited vocal range in the A section gives voice to the monotony of the subject's life. However, the first point of departure occurs in mm. 15-16 leading to the outburst of "fool" (see Example 2.2). Herein, Price uses the flatted second scale degree to take a brief foray into a chain of dominant chords that have a loose relationship to the C Phrygian home key. The composer exploits the mode's lowered second scale degree to make allusions to D-flat and E-flat major throughout the piece. Here, the result is a brief sense of ebullience, before returning to the tragic subject. Price is suggesting timbrally that the speaker's gaze is wandering from the depressing focal point of the woman. This moment of light only serves to intensify the outcry "And what hast thou now but thy dusty tears? (Example 2.3)." The composer creates a simultaneity of G dominant (F, G, and B) and E-flat augmented sonorities which creates a harmonic crossroads—the resolution could be the tonic or another distant key.

By leaving the sung C of "tears" unaccompanied, Price is then able to move to the unexpected D11 chord in mm. 24 (see Example 2.4).

[23] Heard, 141.

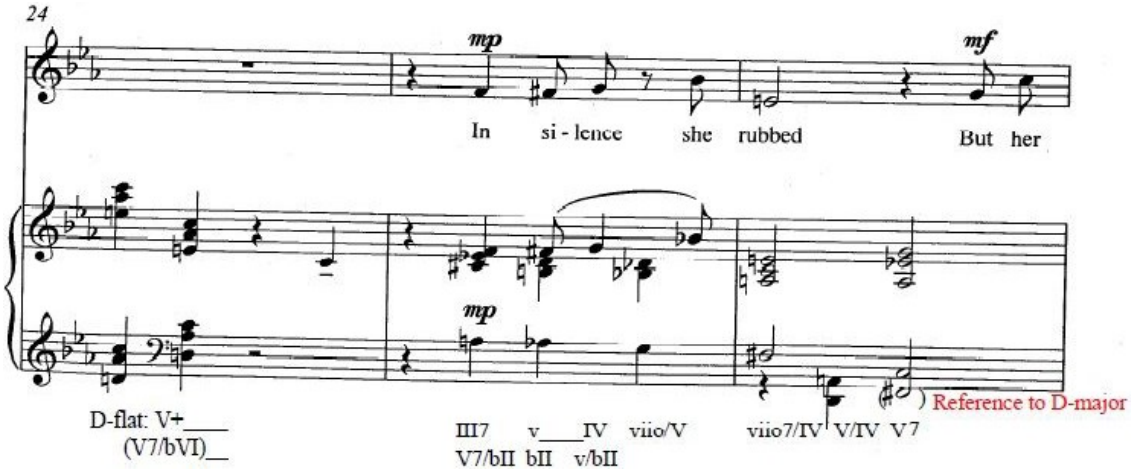
Price takes advantage of an opportunity to employ dramatic silence under the text "And what hast thou now" to frame the rhetorical question with the vacancy attached to the black woman being observed. The combination of these aspects coupled with the melodic zenith on "dusty" create a keen dramatic arc that climaxes at this point.



Example 2.3: "The Washerwoman" (mm. 20—23)[24]

A third section begins with a heightened level of dissonance in the vocal melody on "In silence she rubbed" (see Example 2.4). Another simultaneity of A-flat augmented and E dominant (m. 24) precedes this utterance. A single middle C stands alone before the next vocal entry, adding gravitas to the mention of silence. This, like the moment in m. 15, uses harmonic ambiguity in a way that is coloristic more than functional. These moments, though, serve a rhetorical function—that of a focal shift.

[24] Ibid.

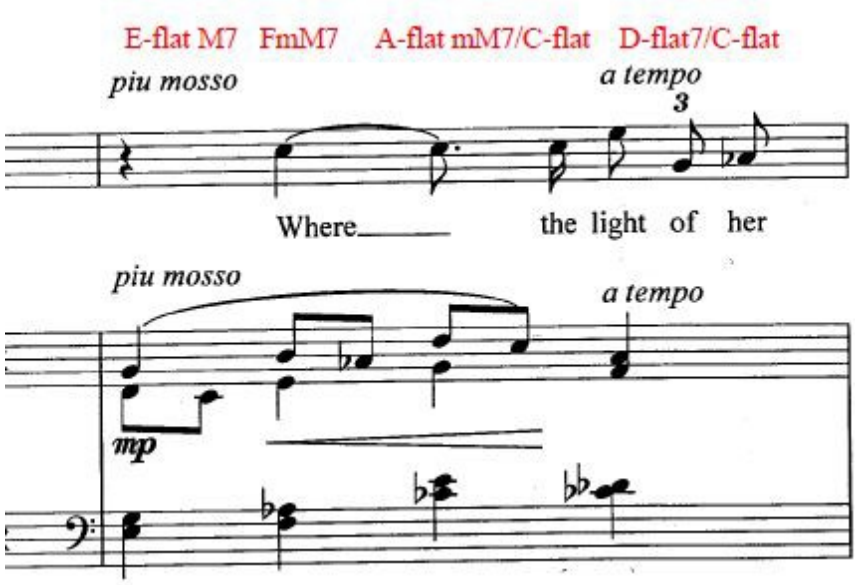


Example 2.4: "The Washerwoman" (mm.24—26)[25]

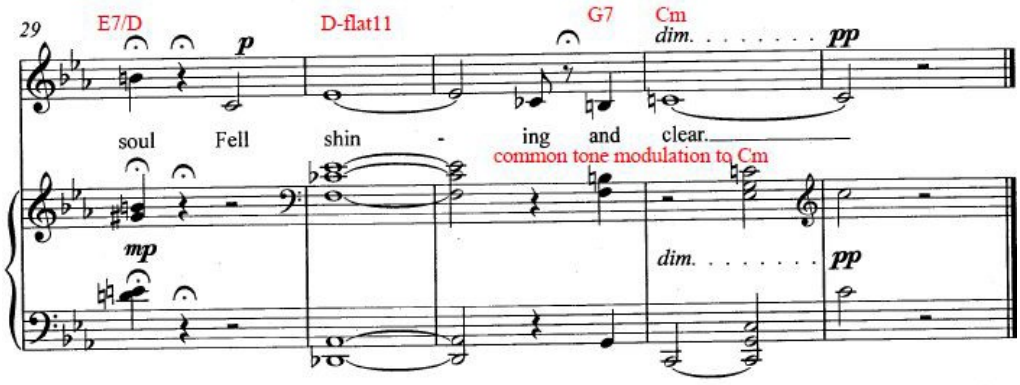
Just as a wide-angle lens on a movie camera can dramatically affect the onlookers' perception of the scene at hand, these moments of tonal uncertain serve to lead the listener's ear through a shift in ocular and textual focus. After the visceral outburst of disconsolation, the solitary shift jerks the focus back to the now repulsive icon of black female entrapment. Dare I say the entrapment within the race woman rhetoric of the Negro Renaissance? Price tempers the dissonant melodic line by anticipating the melodic resolution in the piano part. For example, in m. 27 Price writes contrary motion between the vocal melody and the right hand of the piano. This helps the singer to anticipate the wide intervallic leap of an augmented fifth on "had seen." The piece comes to a moving end.

The più mosso in m. 28 gives these final statements a satisfying increase in energy before the E dominant stillness on "soul" (see Example 2.5). The solitary C on "fell" not only paints the lowly state of the domestic worker, but also makes a subtle allusion to the solitary C's of the washing motive (see Example 2.6).

[25] Ibid.



Example 2.5: "The Washerwoman" (m. 28)[26]



Example 2.6: "The Washerwoman" (mm. 29—33)[27]

The D-flat 11 chord on shining provides a moment of harmonic pause, before price uses the common tone of C-flat to resolve the piece with a satisfying perfect authentic cadence in the home key. It is poignant that the last measure is octave C's in the piano and voice part. This indicates the endless cycle of toil indicated by the washing motive is set to begin again.

[26] Ibid., 142.
[27] Ibid.

"The Washerwoman" exhibits Price's keen ability to use harmony both in a functional and a coloristic manner. Her knowledge of part writing and harmonic invention allows her to mold tonality to her rhetorical whim. A Womanist reading of this piece affords the ability to interpret a compelling narrative that goes beyond the isolated portrait the song provides. This narrative analysis has compelling implications for performers as well.

Since the piece sits in the lower tessitura, it is most suitable for medium voices, and those with significant color and depth of tone in the lower register. This particular vocal quality adds to the dramatic portrait that is the first section of the piece referring to the subject's toil. Particular sensitivity should be exercised in the execution of descending major second intervals. For example, the first "fool" of m. 17 is marked with an accent, indicating an aggressive attack suitable for an angrier affect. However, the descending interval on "long" (m. 10) does not have the accent, and is a *pianto* (Italian for sighing) motive emulating a lament affect. A similar moment happens in the lower register on "tub and tub" (m. 14). The challenge of tuning presents itself in the final section, but as mentioned previously the piano is helpful.

One cannot attempt to sing this piece without awareness of the harmonic landscape. Price suggests moments of pause, repose, and anger that are presupposed by harmony—not the text or the melody. A skillful performer will listen and respond to the coloristic use of dissonance, and respond with sensitive exegesis.

It is also noteworthy that attention to diction brings an added layer of expressive clarity. Moments of internal rhyme like "rub and scrub" are more difficult to deliver because of the initial consonants. The otherwise awkward text setting of these words is justified since they play into the theme of entrapment and the lethargic mood of the subject in question. The songs of Price are full of subtle moments of scene painting such as these, and are therefore rewarding to sensitive performers.

The manuscript of "The Washerwoman" was included in a collection that Price entitled "Songs of 1940 & 41." Price made it a habit to collect her songs in albums, and with a few she returned and made edits in the future. This particular score has two dates—May 8 and May 15, 1941. There is a single copy with no red markings, so it seems that she composed the piece in two sittings. My assertion that Price was indeed interested in the plight of domestics is supported by her composition of *Thumbnail Sketches of a Day in the Life of a Washerwoman.* A four-movement piano composition, the individual movement titles inspire a humanizing glance at domestic life. The movements in order are entitled "Morning," "Dreaming at the Washtub," "A Gay Moment," and "Evening Shadow." The fluctuating affects expressed in these pieces belie an interest in portraying a complex subject. Appendix II includes a facsimile of the full manuscript for consideration. Though Price did not write explicitly in her journals about her political or social ideologies, her care and attention to these texts displays a concern for representation. Price is not the only Negro Renaissance luminary intrigued by these concerns.

Langston Hughes also wrote a poem entitled "Song to a Negro Wash-woman" that was published in the January 1925 *Crisis* periodical.[28] Hughes's biographer, Arnold Rampersad, notes that after quitting the *Washington Sentinel*, "His [Hughes's] next job, working in a wet-wash laundry, was a slap in the face to the black bourgeoisie...One day, Hughes looked up from his bags of soiled laundry to see his mother hurrying towards him in tears after some fresh humiliation at home."[29] His text reads:

> Oh, wash-woman,
> Arms elbow-deep in white suds,
> Soul washed clean,
> Clothes washed clean,
> Clothes washed clean,
> I have many songs to sing to you
> Could I but find the words...[30]

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[28] Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume I: 1902-1941, I, Too, Sing America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 100.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

Though she was not alive during Price's time, activist and scholar Angela Y. Davis makes a thought-provoking point:

> Like their men, Black women have worked until they could work no more. Like their men, they have assumed the responsibilities of family providers...But unlike the white housewives, who learned to lean on their husbands for economic security, Black wives and mothers, usually workers as well, have rarely been offered the time and energy to become experts at domesticity. Like their white working-class sisters...Black women have needed relief from this oppressive predicament for a long, long time.[31]

By decolonizing the lens through which we analyze Price's art songs, we can begin to see how musical enactment of black bodies can free the subject from the shackles of systematized oppression and the representational bondage of domesticity. Florence Price was a living embodiment of this domestic freedom as a woman, a mother, a divorcee, a prolific composer, and a successful entrepreneur.

Further Research

In future work, I will apply this critical framework to previously unpublished songs. Examples include *Lethe* with text by Georgia Douglas Johnson (poet of "The Heart of a Woman") and *Lullaby (for a Black Mother)* with text by Langston Hughes. Price's *Monologue for the Working Class* (Langston Hughes) is an uncharacteristically political piece worthy of further investigation.

Further investigation of Price's relationship with woman patrons like Helen Armstrong Andrews and lyricist Sal Janeway Carroll is also necessary.[32,33]

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[31] Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*, First Vintage (New York: Random House, 1981), 231-232.

[32] H.A. Andrews to F. Price, February 10, 1934. Florence Price Papers (MC 988), series 1, box 1, folder 1. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

This is one of four letters to Florence Price from Helen Armstrong Andrews. Andrews was a great fan of Price's music, and wrote her after attending the performance of the *Symphony in E minor* at the Chicago World's Fair. Andrews had a desire to spread the word about Price's performances, and requested scores to show to interested parties. More research is needed to determine the extent to which Armstrong promoted Price's musical career.

[33] Sal Janeway Carroll, song lyrics. Florence Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a), series 1, box 1, folder 4. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

It is evident from my visit to the Special Collections at the University of Arkansas, that Price had various fruitful relationships with women, including Marian Anderson. Scholars must begin to ask how female artists in the Harlem Renaissance, particular black women, cooperated to promote their causes musical and otherwise.

Chapter Three: Afrological Semiosis and Signifyin(g) in the Art Songs of Florence Price

> *That is, to the Classic African sensibility, everything in the world was alive, but even more important, everything that exists (as present—because both the past and the future only exist in the present and as a speculative continuum of the is—African "Goddess" Is/Is) is art of, connected, as the same thing!*[1]

Have mercy, Lord!

Po' an' black
An' humble an' lonesome
An' a sinner in yo' sight.

Have mercy, Lord![2]

In his article *Signs, Symphonies, Signifyin(G): African-American Cultural Topics as Analytical Approach to the Music of Black Composers*, Horace Maxile explores the possibility of a black universe of topoi—subjects for musical discourse. Building on the musical semiotics corpus of Kofi Agawu, the author proposes five African American topical families: call and response, blues, spiritual/supernatural, jazz, and signifyin(g).[3] His is perhaps the most successful scholarly pursuit of a lexicon of musical signs that can be applied to not only black vernacular music, but the plethora of musical works that toe the line between Western classical music and the blues and jazz aesthetics. Maxile applies his analytical paradigm to the work *Freedom* by Frederick Tillis. The result is a semiotic analysis that not only leads to a thought-provoking musical narrative, but elucidates musical structures that otherwise seem obtuse to the uninformed listener.

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[1] Amiri Baraka, *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 21.

[2] Langston Hughes, *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes: A Classic Collection of Poems by a Master of American Verse,* 6th ed. (New York: Random House, 1990), 23.

[3] Horace J. Maxile, Jr., "Signs, Symphonies, Signifyin(G): African-American Cultural Topics as Analytical Approach to the Music of Black Composers," *Black Music Research Journal* 28, no. 1 (2008): 123–38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25433797, 127.

At the end of his article, Maxile acknowledges that much more work is needed to fully realize a nuanced black semiotic lexicon in which sub-genres of jazz and blues, as well as the realm of African American folk-dance traditions play an integral role. It is compelling, then, to apply a related analytical structure to the art songs of Florence Price—works that engage fully with the composer's knowledge of both Western music and black vernacular music that resonated in the streets of 1930s Chicago. Of prime interest to me is the act of signifyin(g), as defined by Henry Louis Gates, plays into the music hermeneutics of Price's songs. Particularly, the pseudo-spirituals invite a world of intertextual and transmusical references. I will endeavor also to explore how blues, jazz, and call and response play a semiotic role in the songs of Price. Before engaging with a semiotic analysis, though, it is useful to review how topic theory and signifyin(g) can and have been applied to African American music.

Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey* presented a detailed theory of African American literary criticism which centers on the folk story of the Signifying Monkey, as well as the trickster-god Esu. Signifyin(g) can be broadly defined as the propensity of African American authors (read: artists) to comment intertextually on pre-existing literature (both oral and written), and carries the connotation of double-voiced discourse: text that is simultaneously a sound-image and a signifier of pre-existing tropes. Gates describes signifyin(g) as the black "trope of tropes," and theorizes families of black rhetorical devices in relationship to traditional European counterparts. Henry Louis Gates Jr. defines signifyin(g) as "repetition with a difference."[4] His book questioned the French structuralist tradition of signification as the relationship of a sign to the sound-image, and explored the ways in which black literature is self-referential within the tradition.

Signifyin(g) assumes a troping gesture, but the genius is in how authors sample from pre-existing literature while simultaneously making commentary.

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[4] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 66.

Ayana Smith says "Signifying goes beyond imitation, however; to signify, the creative artist must trope in a way that comments upon the original in a new interpretive context. Signifying, therefore, creates a new subtext through the intersection of the original with the trope that is analogous to the physical and metaphorical nature of the crossroads."[5] At the root of Gates's literary theory is the African deity Esu-Elegbara and his African American co-conspirator the Signifying Monkey. Esu is the central deity of the Yoruba Ifá system, and is the interpreter of this complex system of divination.[6] Esu is also a trickster-god, and is associated with the literary and musical trope of the crossroads.[7]

The Signifying Monkey is also a master of language, and uses his mastery of subtle rhetorical variance and double-speak to confound the proud lion. Roger Abrahams collected the following version of the tale of the Signifying Monkey:

> Deep down in the jungle so they say
> There's a signifying motherfucker down the way.
> There hadn't been no disturbin' in the jungle for quite a bit,
> For up jumped the monkey in the tree one day and laughed,
> "I guess I'll start some shit."
> Now the lion come through the jungle one peaceful day,
> When the signifying monkey stopped him and this what he started to say.
> He said, "Mr. Lion," he said, "A bad-assed motherfucker down your
> way."
> He said, "Yeah! The way he talks about your folks is a certain shame.
> I even heard him curse when he mentioned your grandmother's name."
> The lion's tail shot back like a forty-four,
> When he went down the jungle in all uproar.
> He was pushing over mountains, knocking down trees.

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[5] Ayana Smith, "Blues, Criticism, and the Signifying Trickster," *Literature and Music* 24, no. 242 (2005): 179–91, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143005000449, 184.

[6] Though the ifá system originates with the Yoruba people of West Africa, expressions of the system of divination and the worship of the *orisha* (deities) has expression throughout the diaspora. Voodoo in Louisiana and Haiti, Candomblé in Latin America, and Santería in the Caribbean find their root in the Yoruba people. Because of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonization in the Caribbean, many blacks in these regions practice a hybrid religion that incorporates Western Christianity and indigenous religious practices. For example, in Santería practitioners have syncretized their worship of the orisha and Catholic saints.

[7] The seminal example is the country blues classic "Cross Road Blues" (1936) by Robert Johnson. Folk legend posits that Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil at a crossroad in exchange for his ability as a guitarist. The topic is approached again later by Robert Johnson in "Me and the Devil Blues" (1937). In this song, the devil shows up at Johnson's home saying "it's time to go."

In the middle of a pass he met an ape.
He said, “I ought to beat your ass just to get in shape.”
He met the elephant in the shade of a tree.
“Come on long-eared motherfucker, it's gonna be you and me.”
Now the elephant looked up out the corner of his eye,
Said, “Go on bird-shit, fight somebody your size.”
Then the lion jumped back and made a hell of a pass.
The elephant side-stepped and kicked him dead on his ass.
Now he knocked in his teeth, fucked-up his eye,
Kicked in his ribs, tied-up his face,
Tied his tail in knots, stretched his tail out of place.
Now they fought all that night, half the next day.
I'll be damned if I can see how the lion got away.
When they was fussing and fighting, lion came back through the jungle more dead than alive,

When the monkey started some more of that signifying jive.
He said, “Damn, Mr. Lion, you went through here yesterday, the jungle rung.
Now you comeback today, damn near hung.”
He said, “Now you come by here when me and my wife trying to get a little bit,
T' tell me that 'I rule' shit.”
He said, “Shut up, motherfucker, you better not roar
'Cause I'll come down there and kick your ass some more."
The monkey started getting panicked and jumped up and down,
When his feet slipped and his ass hit the ground.
Like a bolt of lightning, a stripe of white heat,
The lion was on the monkey with all four feet.
The monkey looked up with a tear in his eyes,
He said, “Please, Mr. Lion, I apologize.”
He said, “You lemme get my head out the sand
Ass out the grass, I'll fight you like a natural man.”
The lion jumped back and squared for a fight.
The motherfucking monkey jumped clear out of sight.
He said, “Yeah, you had me down, you had me last,
But you left me free, now you can still kiss my ass.”
Again he started getting panicked and jumping up and down.
His feet slipped and his ass hit the ground.
Like a bolt of lightning, stripe of white heat,
Once more the lion was on the monkey with all four feet.
Monkey looked up again with tears in his eyes.
He said, “Please, Mr. Lion, I apologize.”
Lion said, “Ain't gonna be no apologizing.
I'ma put an end to his motherfucking signifying.”
Now when you go through the jungle, there's a tombstone so they say,
“Here the Signifying Monkey lay,

> Who got kicked in the nose, fucked-up in the eyes,
> Stomped in the ribs, kicked in the face,
> Drove backwards to his ass-hole, knocked his neck out of place."
> That's what I say.[8]

The Signifying Monkey, though small in stature and physical power, is able to use his rhetorical skill to dupe his oppressor. Though the monkey meets an unfortunate end in this telling, there are other versions in which the monkey manages to escape safely to the tree canopy. It is not difficult to see how the telling of such a story would be an empowering practice for enslaved Africans in America—those for whom the power of language was systematically stripped away.

Gates says that signifyin(g) can manifest as parody or critique of comparative literature.[9] Signifyin(g) may most easily be recognized in the manipulation of standard European language constructions and use of black vernacular dialect as a direct cultural criticism of Eurocentricity. A clarion example of a modern narrative that signifies is Ishmael Reed's challenging and enlightening *Mumbo Jumbo*.[10]

The literature surrounding musical semiotics is as deep as it is broad, but there have only been a handful of scholars who have attempted the necessary task of formulating a lexicon of African American topoi. This repertory, as discussed previously, is inextricably linked to the oral tradition of enslaved Africans and their subsequent path to fuller participation in American society.

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[8] Brian Bremen and Roger D. Adams, "The Signifying Monkey," http://www.en.utexas.edu/Classes/Bremen/e316k/texts/monkey.html.

An alternate rendition was expertly presented by comedian, actor, and musician Rudy Ray Moore in the film *Dolemite* (1975). Cab Calloway's song "The Jungle King (You Ain't a Doggone Thing)" (1947) recounts the same story within the context of a big band. Oscar Brown Jr. features "The Signifying Monkey" on his 1960 album *Sin & Soul...and Then Some*.

[9] Gates, 65, 92.

[10] Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo* (New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1972).

Ishmael Reed crafts a narrative that subverts Western assumptions of storytelling. Rather, he weaves an intricate web of black literary and spiritual cross references. In order to truly appreciate the novel, one must have some knowledge of the black vernacular tradition, as well as a broad understanding of black literature.

One need only think of the tradition of contrafact in jazz ensembles, Kirk Franklin's incorporation of R&B conventions in the late 1990s Gospel music scene, or the use African American folk music in the symphonies of William Grant Still to see that intertextuality and musical cross-pollination are central concepts of black musical traditions. The application of topic theory to African American music is logical, since in African American music, particularly Gospel and the Blues, the expressive level of musical communication is central. The coded messages of the Antebellum folk spirituals (e.g. "Follow the Drinking Gourd") are marked examples of musical double-voicedness. Kofi Agawu's work with semiotics in African music, Ayana Smith's work applying Gate's theory of Signifyin(g) to the Blues, and Maxile's semiotic analysis of Still's Afro-American Symphony serve as shining examples of black musical poetics, and influence my analysis of Price's songs.

In addition to signifyin(g), Gates explores the trope of the Talking Book as it dates back to the 1700s and is expressed in the books of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker. Composers who trope on existing spiritual melodies, as well as arrangers of spirituals deal with speakerly texts. The texts of spirituals were not written down until after the Civil War. At its core, the developmental trajectory of the folk spiritual to its realization as the concert spiritual is that of an oral history becoming a speakerly text. The idea of African music as text has been explored by theorist and ethnomusicologist Kofi Agawu, and it follows that African American art song presents fertile ground for interplay between musical semiosis and rhetoric.

In her "Blues, Criticism, and the Signifying Trickster," Ayana Smith defined the importance and genius of signifyin(g) in the blues. "The poet-singer's genius, therefore, lies in weaving together lines and ideas from a much larger oral repertory to evoke a particular sentiment in the thread of a new narrative."[11] The trickster-god Esu lives at the crossroads.

[11] Smith, 183.

Likewise, the interplay between pre-existing narrative and the artist (signifier) creates a spatio-temporal and rhetorical chiasmus. The relationship between the sign of the original narrative or musical narrative, the new composition, and the griot subverts traditional notions of signification. As is evident in several West African tribes, the place of the poet-singer is central to the preservation of oral history. The genius of signifyin(g) is in the signifier's ability to exert power over the oppressive Eurocentric structures that surround them by deconstructing the oppressor's narratives. At the same time, they create a lexicon of signs that only have meaning to those who are cultural insiders privy to the body of black written and spoken texts.

The Spiritual/Supernatural Topic in "Feet o'Jesus"

The spiritual/supernatural topic can be identified by its shared musical characteristics with the Negro spiritual. The use of pentatonicism, the flatted sixth and seventh scale degrees, and the primacy of expression in delivery are central. Price's song "Feet o' Jesus" sets the text of Langston Hughes, and imbues it with signs of the black church and spirituals.

The Text

> At the feet o'Jesus, Sorrow like a sea.
> Lordy, let yo' mercy
> Come driftin' down on me.
>
> At the feet o' Jesus
> At yo' feet I stand.
> O, ma little Jesus,
> Please reach out yo' hand.[12]

Hughes's poem presents a subject seeking out the consolation of God. The use of black vernacular is undoubtedly a result of Hughes's observation of the everyday black folk of Harlem. This particular poem is one of an expansive corpus of poignant portrayals of black spiritual life.[13]

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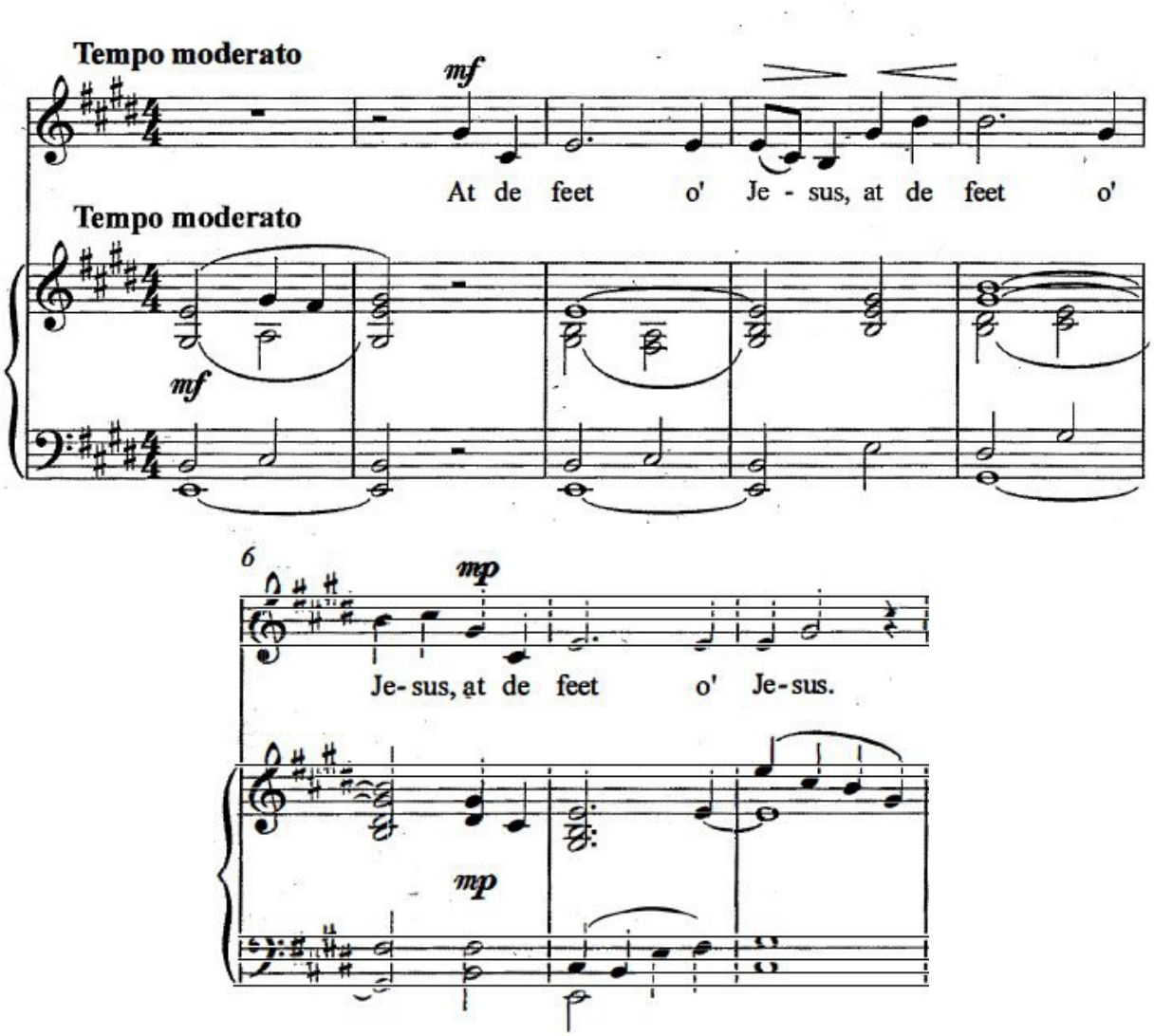
[12] Hughes, 17.

[13] See "Sunday Morning Prophecy" and "Prayer" (set most famously by composer H. Leslie Adams).

Textual signifiers of the spiritual topic beyond the obvious references to the deity, include the narrative formula of the prayer. Firstly, unlike the "Pater Noster" of more Episcopal or Catholic tradition, the prayer opens with an informal invocation stating the subject's emotional state and their physical posture. They are bowed down physically and emotionally, seeking the help of God for a personal need. The opening posture of communication immediately centers the subject's concern instead of the sovereignty of God. God is portrayed as a personal friend. The exclamation "O, ma little Jesus" serves to personalize the spiritual relationship even further. This level of personal communication is a mark of the spiritual repertory.

Spirituals such as "Come by here," "There's a Man Goin' 'Round Takin' Names," and "Lord I Want to be a Christian" exemplify the importance of personal interaction between God and the subject in distress. An additional point of interest is the formula of repetition. Anaphora plays an important role in black oral tradition—particularly in preaching. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech uses the refrain "I have a dream," just as Hughes uses "At the feet o' Jesus."
Price expands on this topic by composing repetitions of "At de feet o'Jesus" within each verse.

Price makes changes to the text which lead to a more marked signification of the spiritual topic. She changes "the" to "de" in "At the feet o' Jesus" to create a folk sensibility. She chooses to repeat the initial text three times, which serves to create an aba' phrase structure. The text does not change for mm. 1-8, but the level of emotional engagement increases with each repetition, which is facilitated by a modulation of the tessitura (see Example 3.1).



Example 3.1: "Feet o' Jesus" (mm. 1—8)[14]

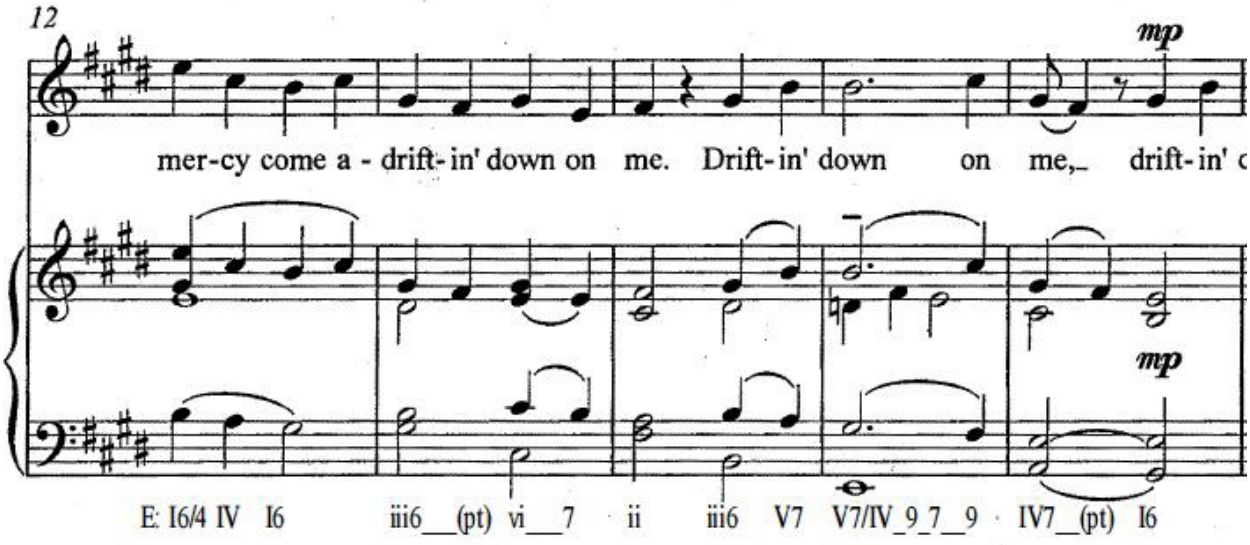
This formula of statement→ re-statement with increased vigor→ re-statement with new material also appears in the spiritual "Ain-a dat Good News." The caller sings out "I got a home up in-a dat kingdom, ain-a dat good news" twice, and for the third iteration sings "Imma gonna lay down dis worl', gonna shoulder up-a my cross, gonna take it home-a to my Jesus ain-a that good news." This formula serves to build emotional intensity, before moving to the next rhetorical structure.

[14] Heard, 30.

The principle difference between the two examples, though, is the propensity of the second to be set in call-and-response structure.[15] Though not reflected in Heard's edition, my research has revealed that Price made room for such an interpretation in her manuscripts.

The Music

Price most likely composed "Feet o' Jesus" on November 28, 1944 as shown in her personal song album *Songs of 1940 & 41* (See Appendix of Manuscript Examples).[16] The most conspicuous marker of the spiritual/supernatural topic is the use of a pentatonic melody, which remains throughout the piece (see earlier figure). The harmony mostly relies on tonic-predominant-dominant relationships, so the occasional secondary dominant (see Example 3.2) creates a welcome variance.



Example 3.2: "Feet o' Jesus" (mm. 12—16)[17]

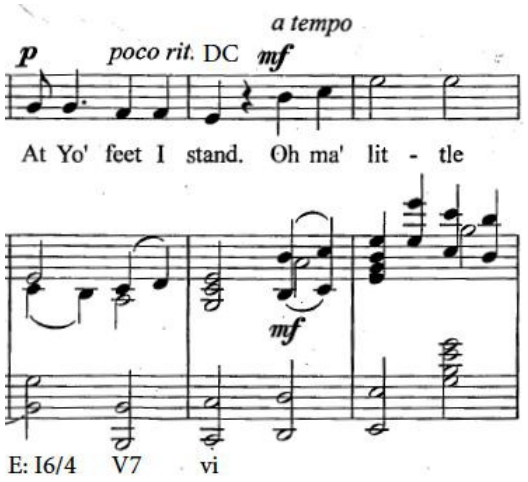
[15] See the choral arrangements by Moses Hogan and William Dawson.

[16] Florence Price, *Songs 1940-41*, solo voice and piano score. Florence Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a), series 2, box 14, folder 10. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

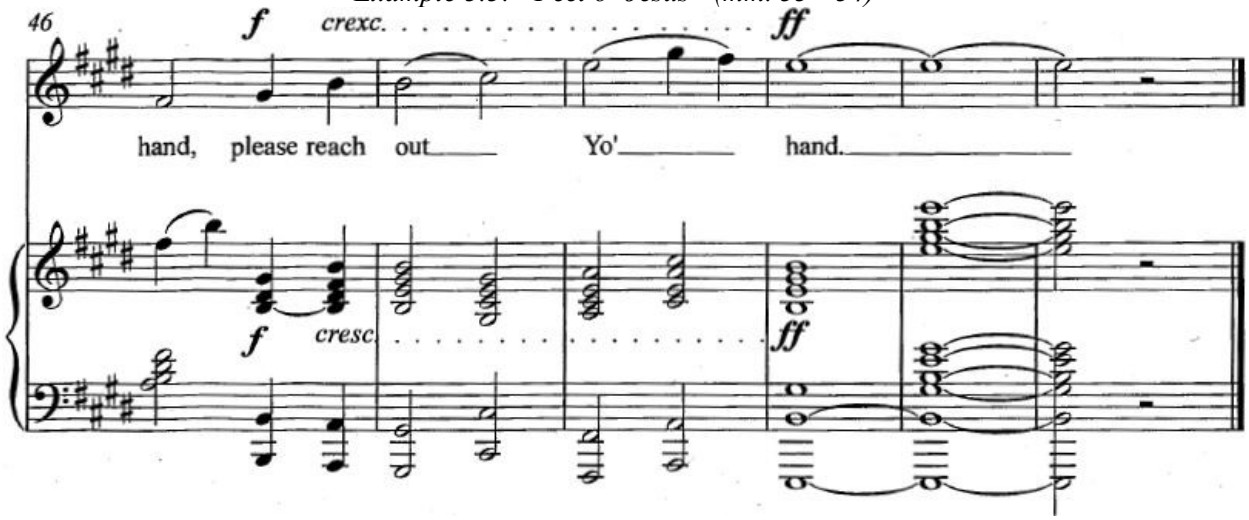
It appears the inscription reads "11-28-1944" though it is anthologized in the album for 1940 & 41. It is likely that Price returned and added to the album in later years.

[17] Heard, 30.

The appearance of a deceptive cadence on the word “stand” in (see Example 3.3) casts a shadow of doubt upon the believer’s prayers, which is finally vanished by the forte dynamic and full chordal accompaniment that appears before the final authentic cadence (see Example 3.4).



Example 3.3: “Feet o’ Jesus” (mm. 33—34)[18]



Example 3.4: “Feet o’ Jesus” (mm. 46—51)[19]

Price’s mostly homophonic textures are reflective of her experience as an organist in the African American Presbyterian Church, and transport the believing listener to a church service full of classic hymnody.

[18] Ibid., 31.
[19] Ibid., 32.

The repetitive harmonic structure coupled with the hymn-like accompaniment form a sacred landscape for the subject's prayer.

The importance of call-and-response to African American music and spiritual life has been well documented.[20] Baraka said:

> So, the continuity of even later African religion carried a fundamental relationship as in its continuing Call and Response form. That is, Priest to Congregation. The One and the Many are one thing.[21]

Though the African American Presbyterian Church (of which Price was a member) did not have the same style of worship as what Mahalia Jackson called "the shouting churches," Price creates a moment of improvisatory emotional engagement in the unpublished interlude of "Feet 'o Jesus."[22]

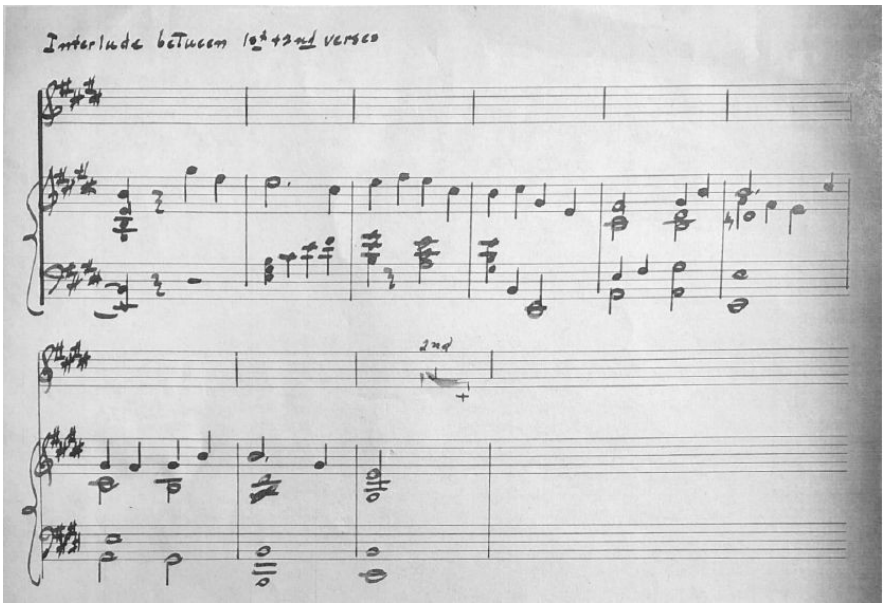


Figure 3.1: Florence Price, Autograph Manuscript labeled "Interlude between 1st & 2nd verses"[23]

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[20] Samuel Floyd explores this topic in-depth in his *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States.*

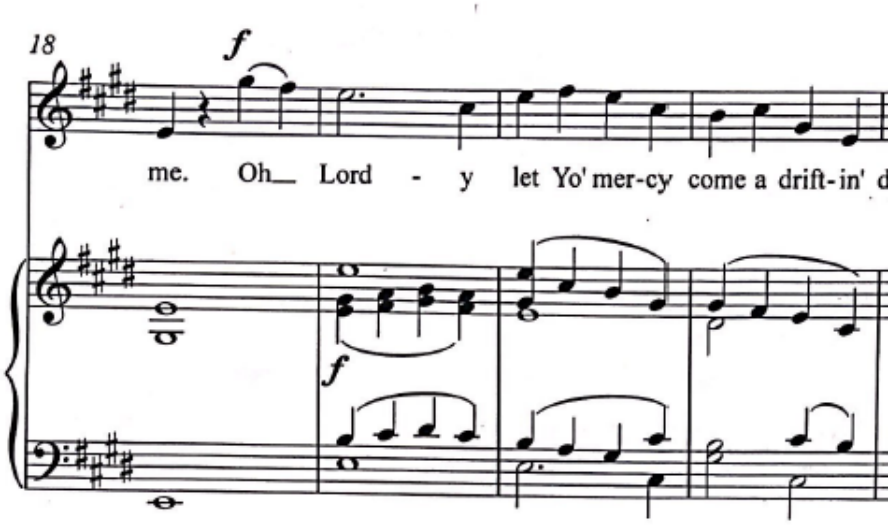
[21] Baraka, 21.

[22] Shana Thomas Mashego, "Music from the Soul of Woman: The Influence of the African American Presbyterian and Methodist Traditions on the Classical Compositions of Florence Price and Dorothy Rudd Moore," (DMA dissertation, University of Arizona, 2010), in The University of Arizona Libraries UA Campus Repository, http://arizona.openrepository.com/arizona/bitstream/10150/193978/1/azu_etd_11355_sip1_m.pdf, 17.

[23] Florence Price, *Feet o' Jesus*, solo voice and piano score. Florence Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a), series 2, box 12, folder 16. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

Figure 3.1 shows what Price entitled "Interlude between 1st and 2nd verses." This interlude was never included in a published edition, but would have provided a moment that would transport black listeners to a church service. To this day, if one enters a predominantly black Baptist church, they would hear the Hammond organ making "commentary" on the pastor's words. Instrumental call and response gives way to congregational response, leading to a shared musical-spiritual experience. The egalitarian nature of black diasporic music making is noted by Christopher Small:

> Thirdly, it is assumed that everyone is musical, that all are capable of taking part in some capacity in the communal work of music making...the music has never been taken over, as has the European classical tradition in our own time, by professionalism...The balance between leader and followers, between individual and society, is perhaps most strikingly embodied in that ubiquitous feature of African choral singing which is known as call and response...even if not formally involved in the performance, the listeners are never silent and static, but respond with what J.H.K. Nketia calls "outward, dramatic expression of feeling."[24]



Example 3.5: "Feet o' Jesus" (mm. 18—21)[25]

[24] Christopher Small, "Africans, Europeans, and the Making of Music," in *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', and Slam Dunking*, ed. Gena Dagel Caponi (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 117-118.

[25] Heard, 31.

The right hand of the piano responds to the melody that accompanies "Oh Lordy let Yo' mercy…" (see Example 3.5), recalling the sense of desperation reached by the third petition for sovereign assistance. This instance exemplifies call and response.

Accounting for the interlude, the subject's prayer begins as a personal invocation (mm. 1-10), evolves into a series of emotionally escalating petitions (mm. 10-18, mm. 18-25), and leads to a moment of repose. One could imagine the subject experiencing a moment of weakness, or wordless tears which carry the weight of desperation. As the speaker is most weak, the nine-measure interlude utters the same musical statement without words. This wordless response carries the same emotional weight of the speaker, but brings the healing balm that allows for a newly invigorated invocation [a tempo, mm. 25-34]. The next two petitions (mm. 34-42 and mm. 42-51) the dynamic gradually climbs to fortissimo, as the vocal tessitura climbs from the "bowed down" posture embodied by the descending perfect fifth of the beginning.

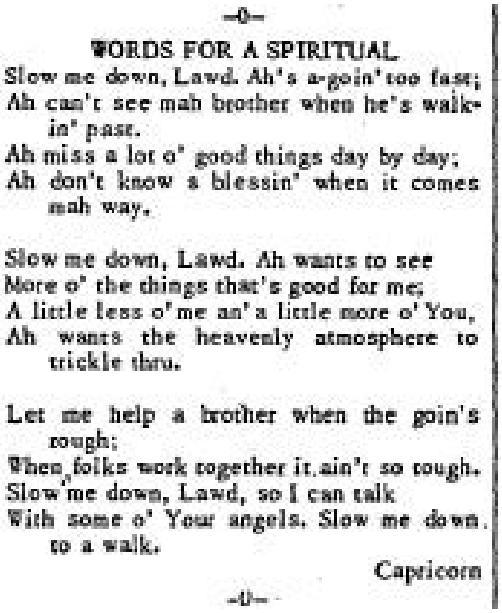
Price accomplishes a subtle, yet emotionally charged musical narrative by engaging with the profound spiritual topic. She also employs her training in classical composition to knit in moments of subtle harmonic variance that engage the ear during repetitions. Price signifies on Hughes's text by bringing out the spiritual topic in musical form, further emphasizing anaphora by including additional repetitions, and by constructing a pianistic "congregational" response to the caller within the context of an art song. Price speaks both to the reality of the prayer in the present, and to the musical past through spirituals. She engages with the text of Harlem and the speakerly texts of her enslaved forebears.

Signifyin(g) in "Words for a Spiritual"

The Text

The text of "Words for a Spiritual" was taken from the *Chicago Tribune* and is attributed to the *nom de plume* "Capricorn."

In a letter dated December 9, 1948, Price requested permission to set the text and asked if the title could be changed to "Slow Me Down Lawd."[26]



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WORDS FOR A SPIRITUAL

Slow me down, Lawd. Ah's a-goin' too fast;
Ah can't see mah brother when he's walkin' past.
Ah miss a lot o' good things day by day;
Ah don't know a blessin' when it comes mah way.

Slow me down, Lawd. Ah wants to see
More o' the things that's good for me;
A little less o' me an' a little more o' You,
Ah wants the heavenly atmosphere to trickle thru.

Let me help a brother when the goin's rough;
When folks work together it ain't so tough.
Slow me down, Lawd, so I can talk
With some o' Your angels. Slow me down to a walk.

Capricorn

—0—

Figure 3.2: "Words for a Spiritual" as seen in Chicago Daily Tribune[27]

Figure 3.2 shows the poem as it appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. The poem first appeared in the August 20, 1948 issue of the *Tribune.* The use of black vernacular spelling indicates the author's attempt to evoke the spiritual topic, as well as an attempt at authenticity. The speaker's repeated pleas to "Slow me down Lawd" serve an anaphoric gesture that precedes the verses.

The desire to truly see one's brother and to be aware of the "heav'nly atmosphere" that God brings hearkens to the evangelical tone resonant in the sermons of black ministers. This sermon, though, is not spoken to a congregation of believers. Rather, it seems to speak to the everyman—specifically an African American—who beset by the trials and tribulation of this world has forgotten their spiritual roots.

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[26] Florence Price, diary/music scores notebook, December 9, 1948. Florence Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a), series 1, box 1, folder 7. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

[27] Capricorn, "A Line o' Type or Two: Words for a Spiritual," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 20, 1948.

Assuming the author of this poem is not African American, the poem reads as an essentialist pamphlet that seeks to evoke the spiritual nature of the "sage Negro" or "Uncle Tom" trope of minstrelsy. However, if the poet is African American, it becomes a reminder for blacks to remember their God (also their spiritual roots) in the midst of oppression.

Though it is impossible to discern the identity of the poet in question, engaging with the qualities of Price's setting and the poet's use of rhetorical devices shines a light on instances of signifyin(g) and Afrological semiosis.

The rhyme scheme comes mostly in the form of rhyming couplets, which aligns the poem with forms of storytelling that appear in African diasporic folk traditions. Nursery rhymes, children's playground rhymes, and even Aesop's fables employ this rhyme scheme. Rhyming couplets help to not only solidify the story in the memories of the non-literate, but also endow texts with a lyrical quality that welcomes musical accompaniment. As referenced earlier, the familiar references to God ("A little less o' me an' a little more a' you") also signal the language of black religious life in America. Perhaps the most poignant section of the poem occurs in the second strophe. The emphasis shifts from a personal narrative to the character's relationship to greater society ("Let me help a brothuh when the goin's rough, When folks work together it ain't so tough"). Focus on the relationship of the individual to the whole is a central tenet of West African tribal identity, and was an essential component of survival during slavery and even after the Great Migration. Price certainly believed in the idea of black social connectivity as a member of the National Association of Negro Musicians.[28]

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[28] "Finest Musical Talent in the Country Gathers in Chicago for NANM Annual Convention," *Pittsburgh Courier* (Pittsburgh, PA), Aug. 31, 1940.

In this article, Price is pictured with black luminaries including composer William L. Dawson of the Tuskegee Institute. The author of the feature is quoted saying "Persons famous in the music history of the race gathered for Honors Night" as the caption of this picture. Another picture shows Price speaking with composer R. Nathaniel Dett.

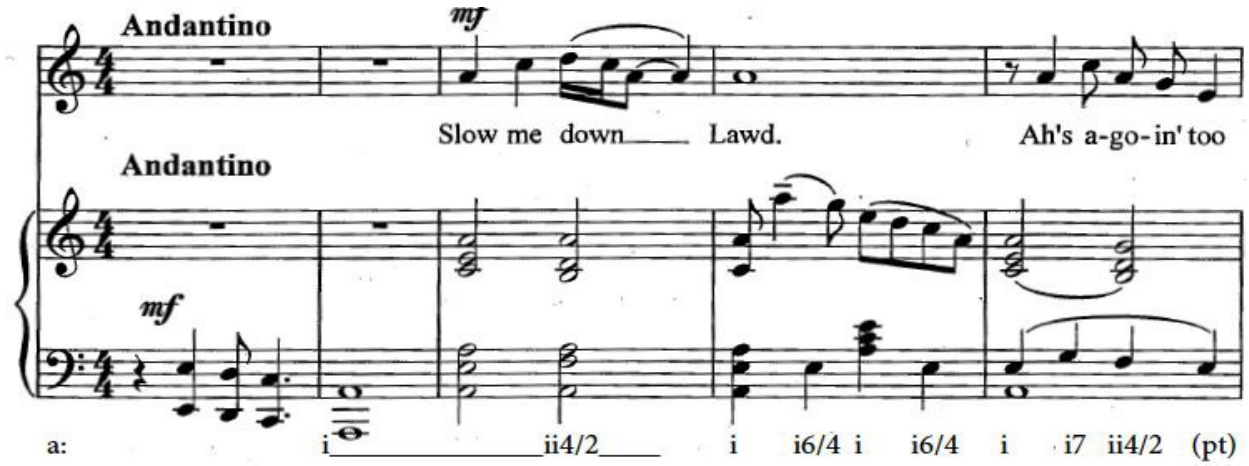
She depended heavily on Margaret and Estelle Bonds, as well as other members of the Chicago black community to assist her in copying parts for the premier of her *Symphony in E minor*.[29] Perhaps the focus on collective identity was attractive to Price. Another possibility is that the evocation of the spiritual by a non-black writer spurred in Price a desire to signify.

With Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois's promotion of the spiritual repertory as the bedrock of black musical achievement, Price's more chromatic and inventive songs found no sociological place. Price may have seen this poem as an opportunity to riff on the spiritual topic itself, while simultaneously "calling out" the Harlem bourgeoisie who were disconnected from the music of working-class African Americans in Chicago and Harlem. I propose a reading of "Words for a Spiritual" from this perspective. Price's use of the spiritual topic coupled with her signature harmonic experimentation combine in this piece to create a double-voiced song.

The Music

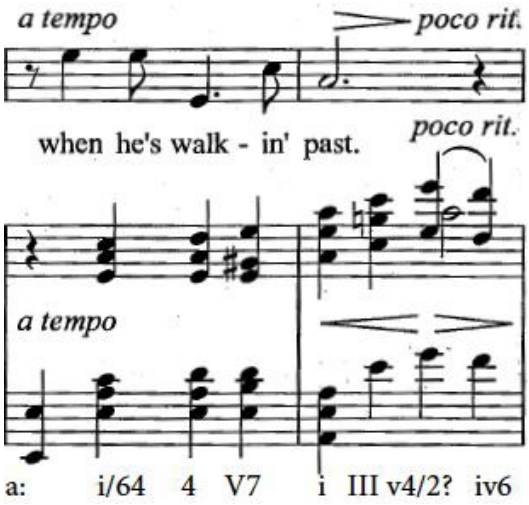
The nearly too conspicuous introduction of the spiritual topic is heralded in the first measure of the song in the left hand of the piano. The melody follows suit in a pentatonic fashion that continues throughout the entire song (see Example 3.7). Harmonically, the piece begins simply with mostly tonic and pre-dominant chords in the key of A minor. The opening texture is homophonic in the right hand, evoking Price's knowledge of the organ and by association the church (see Example 3.6).

[29] Florence B. Price, Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3. Vol. 19. Music of the United States of America, ed. Rae Linda Brown and Wayne Shirley (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2008), xl.



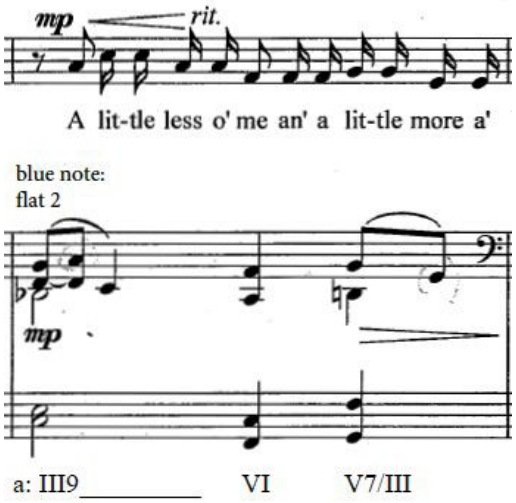
Example 3.6: "Words for a Spiritual" mm. 1—5[30]

By the time the text "when he's walkin' past" appears, the composer begins to stray from the more elementary key relationships using a quartal harmony under "walkin'" that obscures what would be a tonic-dominant progression (see Example 3.7).



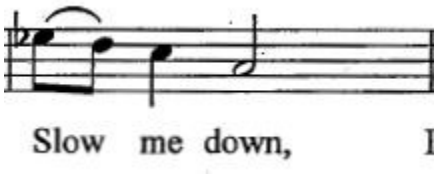
Example 3.7: "Words for a Spiritual" (mm. 9—10)[31]

[30] Heard, 167.
[31] Ibid.



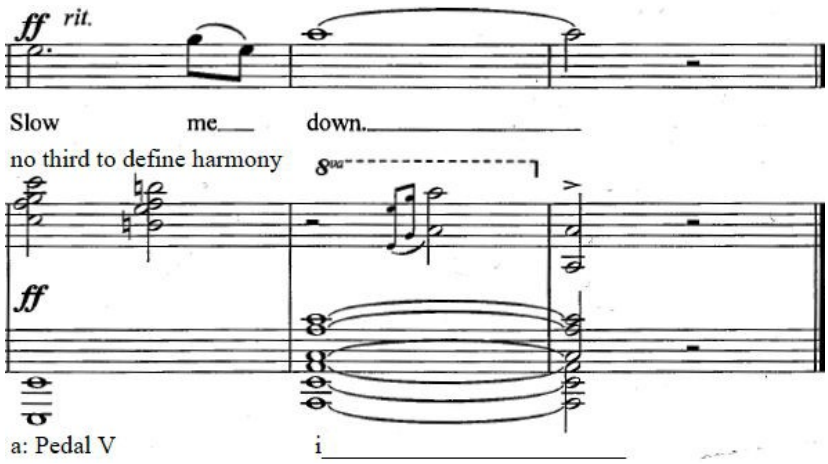
Example 3.8: "Words for a Spiritual" (m. 23)[32]

Price refers further to the spiritual topic in her use of blue notes. The flatted second scale degree appears in m. 23, which sets up a brief reference to the parallel major (see Example 3.8). In another instance, E-flat appears on the text "slow" in m. 36 which is the flatted fifth scale degree of A minor—not the most typical appearance of a blue note. The harmonic language here and in the last three measures of the song is not functional in the Western Classical sense, rather tone collections serve a timbral and expressive purpose (see Examples 3.9 and 3.10).



Example 3.9: "Words for a Spiritual" (m. 36)[33]

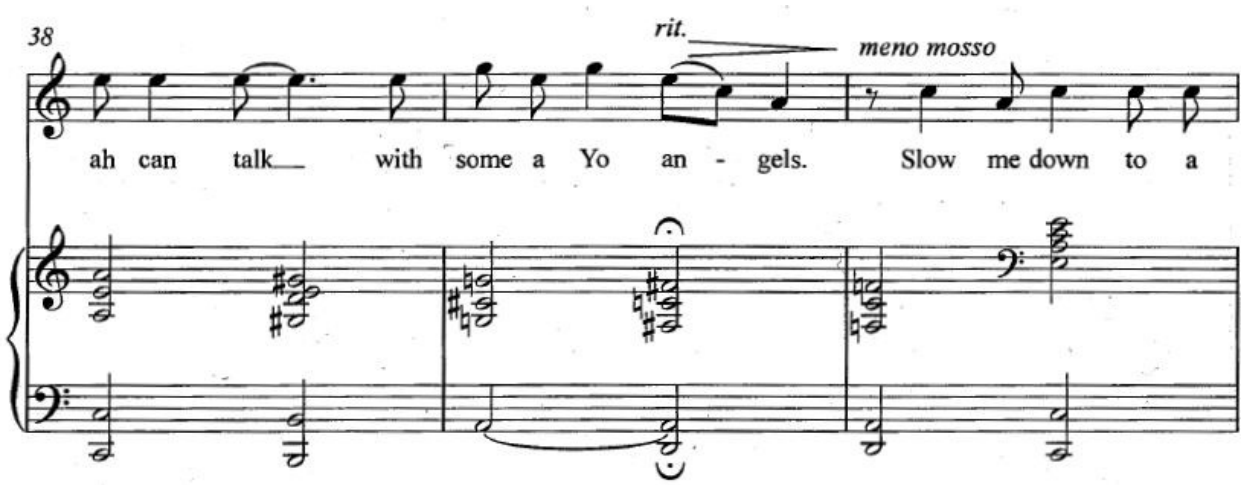
[32] Ibid., 168.
[33] Ibid., 170.



Example 3.10: "Words for a Spiritual" (mm. 42—44)[34]

Price uses the flexible canvas of the A minor pentatonic (emancipated from the harmonic pull of ti and fa) to explore chromatic motion of the inner voices. For example, in mm. 38-40 the melody remains in a stable pentatonic context while parallel tritones (D to G-sharp) descend chromatically undermining the rules of Western voice leading conventions. However, the aural effect is that of mounting harmonic and emotional tension (see Example 3.11). What was a simple spiritual topical landscape has become fraught, hearkening to *Sturm und Drang* or the supernatural topic (as employed in Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*).

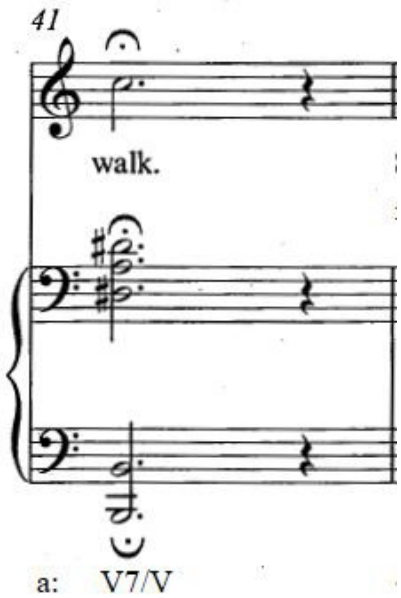
[34] Ibid.



Example 3.11: "Words for a Spiritual" (mm. 38—40)[35]

"Words for a Spiritual" places Price's musical prowess on full display. She expertly shows that she can write a "spiritual," but does not sacrifice harmonic complexity and expressive breadth. The elementary and formulaic exposition develops into an ever-spiraling sense of harmonic discontinuity. The composer is able, though, to justify risky harmonic decisions by engaging with the text. Her use of more simplistic harmonies during the iterations of "Slow me down" aligns with the character's earnest plea for clarity and spirituality (see Example 3.6). Likewise, the V7/V chord on "walk" in m. 41 is a moment of harmonic stasis that topically evokes a cadenza within the Western canon. However, the absence of vocal virtuosity subverts this topical expectation. The listener, then, is led to a musical narrative that reflects the character's prayer to be slowed to a walking pace (see Example 3.12).

[35] Ibid.



Example 3.12: "Words for a Spiritual" (m. 41)[36]

Price adds repetitions of "Slow me down" on the final page of the song not only to use repetition as a signifier of the spiritual topic, but as an opportunity to build to a musical climax. The final "slow" in m. 42 is accompanied by another quartal harmony followed by a less than aurally satisfactory v7 (see Example 3.10). The use of the minor version of this dominant sonority is a final moment of "naming" the simplicity of the spirituals. The other voice of this moment evokes the subject's desperation and focuses the listener on the singer as they prepare for their climactic high A natural.

Price shows that the spiritual topic presents opportunities beyond the expressive topical layer of communication. As is shown in her instrumental works, pentatonicism affords a level of harmonic freedom since tendency tones are less of an aural factor. It is probable that Price resisted the limiting assertions of the Harlem bourgeois, and therefore appropriate that she chose to show much of her musical language in such a short song. Her simultaneous trope of the spiritual topic and play with musical modernism both pay homage to the spiritual genre and challenge limitations to her and other black composers' musical contributions.

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[36] Ibid.

Conclusion: The Poet and Her Song

In conclusion, I have posited a theory of black musical semiotics and signifyin(g) gestures based on the scholarship of Henry Louis Gates Jr., and several musicologists. Price's songs, like Esu, lay at a crossroads of black musical history. Composers during the Negro Renaissance chose between uplift and originality—accommodation and ingenuity. As "Feet o' Jesus" and "Words for a Spiritual" suggest, Florence Price had at her disposal a plethora of musical strategies including the spiritual topic. She was fully capable of directly quoting existing spirituals, but she chose to signify on the spiritual topic and to call out the limitations of accommodationist musical rhetoric.

Price noted in a letter to Frederick Schwass the emotional power of the spirituals, but also defended the inclusion of the juba dance and the blues in an African American classical music aesthetic.

> The intention behind the writing of this work [Symphony No. 3] it was a not too deliberate attempt to picture a cross section of present-day Negro life and thought with its heritage of that which is past, paralleled or influenced by contacts of the present day. In all of my works which have been done in the sonata form with Negroid idiom, I have incorporated a Juba as one of the several movements because it seems to me to be no more impossible to conceive of Negroid music devoid of the spiritualistic theme on the one hand than the strongly syncopated rhy [sic] rhythms of the Juba on the other.[37]

For this reason, Price is an adroit griot. In a recent *New York Times article*, Douglas Shadle said:

> Everything she was doing was musically mainstream but at the same time idiosyncratic…Her music has kind of a luminous quality that strikes me as her own. Our understanding of American modernism of the 1930s and 1940s is not complete without Price's contribution.[38]

In future work, I will further develop a semiotic approach to Price's songs and instrumental works. In addition, it would be a worthwhile enterprise to investigate songs in which the character is double-voiced.

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[37] Florence Price, class essays, 1938. Florence Price Papers (MC 988a), series 1, box 1, folder 4. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

[38] Micaela Baranello, "Once Overlooked, Now Rediscovered," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Feb. 11, 2018.

For example, "The Poet and His Song" with text by Paul Laurence Dunbar presents a fascinating portrait of a subject singing to avoid facing their oppressors.[39] The poem is double-voiced, since it is clear that the poet in question could be Dunbar, but the liminal space that the composer-signifier occupies presents compelling hermeneutical issues. The theory presented herein does not engage with the signs of the ring shout or juba dance, but these topoi are evident in Price's symphonies and the string quartet *Negro Folksongs in Counterpoint*.[40] Semiotic readings of Price allow for a more nuanced understanding of the expressive components of the songs. Coupling this with analysis of the composer's harmonic modernity helps researchers to explore hermeneutics in a way that justifies her harmonic choices—choices which do not always align with an Enlightenment influenced concept of motivic development. As we begin to theorize of Price as poet-composer, she emerges as a bridge between the two feuding siblings of Negro Renaissance musical milieu—tradition and invention

[39] Heard, 134-139.

[40] James Greeson and Dale Carpenter, *The Caged Bird: The Life and music of Florence B. Price*, narrated by Julia Sampson (2015; Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), DVD.

I first encountered these pieces when viewing Greeson and Carpenter's documentary. A live recording of the piece was presented at the Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Kentucky. The score was prepared from the manuscript by Douglas Shadle. The recording is available at http://wuol.org/audio-florence-prices-negro-folk-songs-counterpoint/.

Chapter Four: Composing Behind the Veil: Double Consciousness in the Art Songs of Florence Price

Social theorist and prolific essayist W.E.B. Du Bois outlined a radical viewpoint on the state of race in early 20th Century American in his seminal publication *The Souls of Black Folk.* The book is a collection of Du Bois's essays previously published in periodicals. He critiques the accommodationist model of social change espoused by Booker T. Washington. Washington preached that black economic prosperity would erase the racial divide that plagued (and still plagues) American society—colloquially referred to as a "boot straps" model where blacks can pull themselves up by their boot straps and make a new life through economic prosperity and hard work. Du Bois seeks to analyze and diagnose the issue of the color line, which he terms the predominant problem of the twentieth century. He also explores what it means to black in America from a sociological perspective. In his section entitled "The Forethought," Du Bois lays out his mission:

> Leaving, then, the world of the white man, I have stepped within the Veil, raising it that you may view faintly its deeper recesses, —the meaning of its religion, the passion of its human sorrow, and the struggle of its greater souls.[1]

In the first chapter of The Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois discusses life behind what he calls "the Veil"—meaning the racist color line that divides American society. Du Bois describes black life as a double consciousness wherein black folk must sublimate their self-consciousness in order to exist in a world that vilifies them. Black folk effectively see themselves through the eyes of others, because of the prevailing mental oppression of slavery.

[1] W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, ed. Candace Ward and Stanley Appelbaum, 1994 reprint (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1903), v.

He says, "One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder…this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self."[2] Sociologically, double consciousness manifests in African Americans' use of linguistic code switching as they interact with white co-workers versus black co-workers in the professional realm. Psychologically, double consciousness is an internal strife that seeks to reconcile American identity and nationalism with the knowledge that the land you call home has deemed you less than a citizen—less than human. Du Bois's perspective is unique in its focus on the sociological dimension of consciousness. Prior to Du Bois, the black social change ethic was focused around emancipation and concurrent to his writings anti-lynching campaigns were emerging in urban centers. However, the pathetic dimension of oppression as well as the connection of consciousness to ethics is a peculiarity of Du Bois.

Black artists, too, negotiate life behind the Veil. The desire to create art reflective of one's lived experience is oftentimes moderated by the reality of white supremacist ideology in the arts. Articles exploring this dimension of black music-making are numerous, and include Hildebrand's article on Roland Hayes's double conscious artistic identity. [3]

History of the Veil: Double Consciousness Theories

Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* represents the author's attempt to outline to trouble of colonized blacks from the perspective of psychoanalysis.[4]

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[2] Ibid., 2.

[3] Jennifer Hildebrand, "'Two Souls, Two Thoughts, Two Unreconciled Strivings': The Sound of Double Consciousness in Roland Hayes's Early Career," Black Music Research Journal 30, no. 2 (2010): 273–302.

Hildebrand's article explores Roland Hayes's career trajectory from the perspective of the artist's own vocal self-discovery. See also George Ciccariello-Maher's "A Critique of Du Boisian Reason: Kanye West and the Fruitfulness of Double-Consciousness" for a more contemporary account of how double consciousness has manifested in the career trajectory and lyrical content of rapper Kanye West.

[4] Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, 1st Evergreen (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1968).

His thesis is that by outlining the myths of race-based superiority and inferiority as a form of neurosis, he can topple the social hierarchy that oppresses us all. Fanon speaks from the perspective of a native Antillean who grew up on the French island colony of Martinique. In his first chapter, he mentions that Martinicans are only able to view themselves objectively by comparing themselves to the Other.

> The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question. . . No one would dream of doubting that its major artery is fed from the heart of those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man.[5]

This statement aligns with Du Bois's Veil rhetoric in which black folk only see themselves through the lens of whiteness. Fanon takes this assertion a step further by critiquing the psycho-social element of the assertion of ego. In a later chapter, Fanon applies Adler's individual psychology which would say that black people spend time reinforcing their superiority over their comrades as a compensatory response to the inferiority reinforced by slavery and colonization. While Fanon admits that this could be an element of black psychology, he critiques Adler's exclusion of the element of societal hierarchy and economic oppression. Therefore, Fanon posits, blacks assert the ego as a resistance to their oppression, but this assertion of the ego is through the lens or veil of whiteness. The colonized state of the Martinique is thus reflected in the colonization of the black man's own self-perception.

Price lived in the colonized United States and inhabited an institution traditionally exclusionary of black women—the New England Conservatory. She surely experienced this sense of ego dysphoria as she constantly aspired to major [white] acclaim as evidenced by the letter to Koussevitzky and various letters to music publishers.[6]

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[5] Ibid., 8.

[6] Florence B. Price, diary/musical scores notebook. Florence Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a), series 1, box 1, folder 7. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

Another salient point made by Fanon relates to language. In his first chapter entitled "The Black Man and Language" he outlines how black folk learn to speak two forms of English—an English dialect intended for other black folk, and one found acceptable by the majority (white) culture:

> Recently an acquaintance told me a story. A Martinique Negro landed at Le Havre and went into a bar. With the utmost self-confidence he called, "Waiterrr! Bring me a beeya. Here is a genuine intoxication. Resolved not to fit the myth of the nigger-who-eats his-R's, he had acquired a fine supply of them but allocated it badly.[7]

Later, linguists would refer to this phenomenon as code switching. The act of changing lingual patterns as a form of negotiating life behind the Veil is especially poignant in reference to Signifyin(g) and black musical topoi. From Fanon's perspective, one can begin to ask vital questions about black musical expression, especially in America where the classical music world is ruled by white men. Black composers of classical music, as we have seen, must negotiate Western musical expression (majority culture) while sometimes seamlessly weaving in their specific cultural values through musical topoi. Musical code switching is a form of aural double-consciousness worthy of further exploration. Fanon not only mentions linguistic patterns of colonized black people, but comments on how white people adjust their language as they address black folk:

> Talking to Negroes in this way gets down to their level, it puts them at ease, it is an effort to make them understand us, it reassures them. . . The physicians of the public health services know this very well. Twenty European patients, one after another, come in: "Please sit down. . .Why do you wish to consult me? . . . What are your symptoms? ..." Then comes a Negro or an Arab: "Sit there, boy. . . What's bothering you? . . . Where does it hurt, huh? . . ." When, that is, they do not say: "You not feel good, no?"[8]

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* laid the groundwork for further study of black psychology, and the psycho-sociological effects of colonization. Fanon's work also laid a critical foundation for post-colonial ideologies, and may have influenced black nationalists throughout the 1960s and 70s.

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[7] Fanon, 11.
[8] Ibid., 20.

Paul Gilroy further expounded on post-colonial sociology in his *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* published in 1993.[9] In his seminal publication, Gilroy theorizes a transatlantic black identity marked by double consciousness. Gilroy moves beyond traditional diasporic ideologies to identify the Black Atlantic by the imagery of the slave ship and hybridity. His marriage of double consciousness theory to emergent cultural studies paradigms allowed for a more nuanced discussion of black identity in the shadow of the black power and pan-Africanist movements.

Feminist scholars have expounded on double consciousness theory to be inclusive of the dimension of gender identity. Frances Beale's "Double Jeopardy" speech argues for the uplift of black women in movements for equality.[10] She outlines how black women have had to bear the weight of racial oppression while sublimating the gender bias exhibited by black men:

> Certain black men are maintaining that they have been castrated by society, but that black women somehow escaped this persecution and even contributed to this emasculation. Let me state here and now that the black woman in America can justly be described as a "slave of a slave."[11]

Price addressed this double jeopardy in her letter to Koussevitsky, and even referenced her dual oppression in a school essay.[12] It is especially clear in the Dunbar settings that Florence Price engages with the poet's Veiled imagery from the perspective of one sampling from two musical consciousnesses. As we will see, this often manifests in obtuse form and harmonic flight. Though it is beyond the scope of this project to include a full biography of Paul Laurence Dunbar, it is important to explore Paul Laurence Dunbar's own struggles with his musical and poetic identity.

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[9] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[10] Frances M. Beal, "Black Women's Manifesto; Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" (New York: Third World Women's Alliance, 1969), http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/wlm/blkmanif/#double.

[11] Ibid., 2.

[12] Florence Price, class essays, 1938. Florence Price Papers (MC 988a), series 1, box 1, folder 4. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

Since the advent of the New Negro, Paul Laurence Dunbar has been upheld as an exemplar of black literary accomplishment. During his lifetime, he produced six original collections of poems, as well as several lesser-known essays, plays, short stories, and even musicals![13] He was one of the first black authors to gain widespread appeal, and some of his poems became required reading for a generation of black intellectuals and those aspiring to middle-class life. Harryette Mullen comments on the importance of Dunbar by saying:

> I may be in the last generation African Americans who were routinely required to memorize and recite poetry as we were growing up…all intended to broaden our horizons, to educate, uplift, and civilize us. Dunbar's "Little Brown Baby" and "When Malindy Sings" were among the popular poems frequently recited in performances at school, at church, and at various community events…[14]

Jonathan Daigle notes the importance of Dunbar within the context of the New Negro Movement:

> Like no other artist, Dunbar connected the Talented Tenth to the black masses. He wrote the theme song for Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee and was an original member of Alexander Crummell's American Negro Academy—in fact, he named it.[15]

Whereas Dunbar's poems that emulated European poetic forms garnered adulation from black elites, his dialect poems and lesser known minstrel songs presented a challenge to the New Negro—obsessed with representational politics.

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[13] Paul Laurence Dunbar, *In His Own Voice: The Dramatic and Other Uncollected Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar*. ed. Herbert Woodward Martin and Ronald Primeau (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2002).

This recent publication includes previously uncollected one-act musical productions. The musicals include Uncle Eph's Christmas, Jes Lak White Fo'ks (subtitled "A One-Act Negro Operetto), and Dream Lovers. The volume also includes lyrics for *In Dahomey*—the first full-length Broadway musical featuring an all-black cast and crew. The musical premiered in 1903, the same year *Souls* was published.

[14] Harryette Mullen, "'When He Is Least Himself': Dunbar and Double Consciousness in African American Poetry," *African American Review* 41, no. 2 (2007): 277.

[15] Jonathan Daigle, "Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Marshall Circle: Racial Representation from Blackface to Black Naturalism," *African American Review* 43, no. 4 (2009): 634.

White critics particularly lauded the dialect poems of Dunbar, and he was likened to Burns in his ability to speak directly to a particular black experience—Southern plantation life. Dunbar himself embodied a double consciousness with his dual poetic voices, one being that of a tradition grounded in European poetic forms and another being grounded in the working-class black experience. Mullen comments within her article on Dunbar:

> Dunbar's troubled life embodies, and his poetry of segregated linguistic domains articulates, a state that W.E.B. Du Bois called "double consciousness," the historical self-awareness of African Americans struggling to overcome a legacy of slavery and discrimination while claiming the rights, responsibilities, and benefits of freedom.[16]

His bifurcated artistic identity, including his work as a minstrel songwriter beg for a discussion of Dunbar as a lyricist behind the Veil.

In Jonathan Daigle's impressive article entitled "Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Marshall Circle: Racial Representation from Blackface to Black Naturalism," the author challenges the claim that Dunbar's use of black vernacular constitutes a surrender of his own black identity. Rather, he considers the Marshall Circle—a black-owned hotel and entertainment venue—as a space where black minstrel performers claimed a new level of artistic freedom previously afforded only to whites. Dunbar's success as a coon song writer belied his ability to use poetic masking to not only appease white sensibilities, but to usurp the power of parody from white performers. Daigle observes:

> These white critics probably overstate Dunbar's songwriting renown, but it does not take a conspiracy theorist to recognize that the century-long attempt to disentangle "authentic" black art from supposed opportunism has marginalized an important mode of nadir-period black cultural expression.[17]

[16] Mullen, 278.
[17] Daigle, 639.

Considering the limited options for artistic agency presented to blacks at the turn of the 19th century, it is not difficult to understand how blacks donning the minstrel mask represents a specific type of activism that usurps the power of parody from white audiences. If we begin to consider the work of Dunbar in this light, it becomes apparent that his ability to poetically code switch is not a simple accommodation to the desires of white audiences. Rather, Dunbar's voice becomes prophetic—able to comment across boundaries of time-space and race to make a humanistic statement that transcends said boundaries. In a similar way, black composers of the early-mid 1920s had to negotiate the requisites of economic success in a white-dominated market with the pressure of representational politics generated by the black bourgeoisie.

Certainly, Florence Price was negotiating double consciousness in her compositions. Her work is further complicated by colorism—the idea of the societal superiority of fair complexion to dark complexion. Price was quite fair-skinned and, as discussed in Chapter 1, lived a relatively elite life. Her mother was clearly aware of the politics of "passing," because she instructed Price to write Pueblo, Mexico as her birthplace on her application to New England Conservatory.[18] In addition, she paid for her daughter to have a one-bedroom apartment, so as not to arouse suspicion about her class. Along with the familial pressure to pass, Price also negotiated the push for a black nationalistic music rooted in the sound world of Negro Spirituals.

Price's conservatory education provided her with the standard musical materials of Western compositional practice, but the desire to create a music of Negroid character was strong. Price's settings of Paul Laurence Dunbar texts poignantly engage with the poet and the composer's experience of double consciousness.

[18] Florence Price Robinson, notes on 3x5 cards. Florence Price Papers (MC 988), series 1, box 1, folder 11, card 43. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

It is fascinating that Dunbar, a poet known for writing dialect poems and traditional sonnets, would be set with some frequency by a composer who wrote settings of spirituals and symphonies (the epitome of Western musical constructs). Through use of harmonic and formal experimentation, as well as blues aesthetics, Price paints stunning and dramatic portrayals of black life using Dunbar's poetry.

Hearing Double Consciousness

After this in-depth exploration of double consciousness, a conscientious reader may be inquiring "How is it that double consciousness can manifest as an aural phenomenon? How do we hear it?" There is some precedent for answering this question, including Jennifer Hildebrand's biographical exploration of Roland Hayes's early career. In her article, she notes a pivotal point in Hayes's career after a recital in Santa Monica when he realized he was attempting to shape his voice to fit a European ideal.

> When he breakfasted with his mother the next morning, he asked her "whether she thought it was possible that there really was something unusual in my voice, something that the voices of white people did not have"—whether she thought "that I have been trying to turn myself into a white artist, instead for making the most of what I was born with…" He recognized that "I had been suffering from a racial habit of imitation…" Concomitant with this realization came a vow: "I swore I would use the 'rich purplish red' voice that Nature had given me."[19]

It is worth mentioning that Hayes and Price were familiar with each other's work.[20] A deep dive into the fraught anthropological history of categorizing essential black characteristics including sound and timbre is beyond the scope of this paper. However, I will posit some theories surrounding the sounding of double conscious bodies.

Firstly, double consciousness manifests most obviously in pieces where European topoi and Afrological topoi as the ones I have discussed exist within the same piece or even simultaneously.

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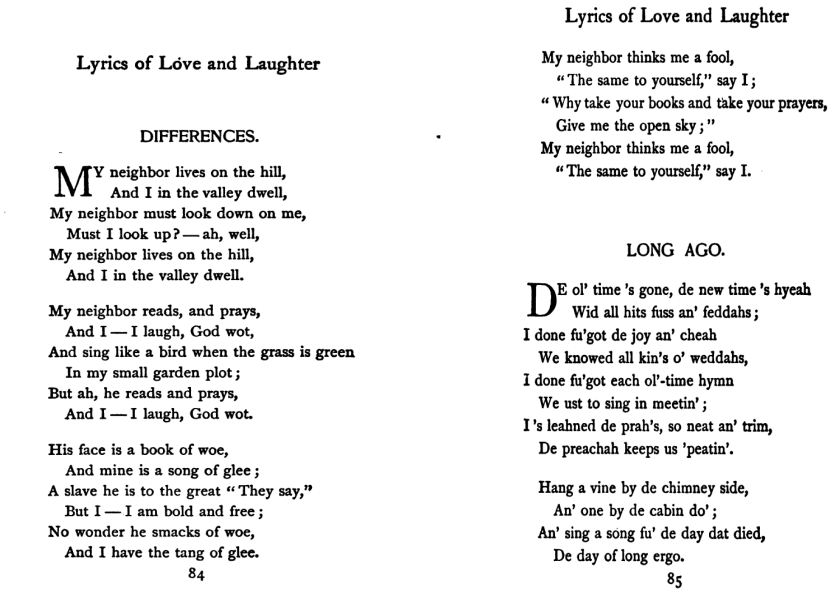
[19] Hildebrand, 284.

[20] R. Hayes to F. Price, March 31, 1935. Florence Price Papers, series 1, box 1, folder 1. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

A wonderful example is the second movement of Florence Price's *Symphony in E minor*, where the horn choir plays a pentatonic primary theme signaling both Eurological and Afrological expressive realities simultaneously.

Secondly, and related to the first idea, double consciousness also manifests as musical discontinuity. This form of discontinuity may appear in direct opposition to previously congruous structure. Musical transitions become more abrupt, and often harmonic tension results. This leads to the third trait that I find particularly interesting in Florence Price's songs—sudden and unprepared modulation. The use of direct modulation is a characteristic of contemporary Gospel music, and is used as a rhetorical device to evoke mounting emotional intention. Of course, Price's music looks forward to this genre, but the concept of evoking emotional urgency is essential to understanding black aesthetic paradigms.

My analysis of two Price settings of Dunbar texts explore these musical characteristics as they interact with the text. I seek to answer the question, "How does Price's double consciousness as a composer lead to a specific reading of Dunbar's poems?" I also question how discontinuity itself becomes a topic emulating the dysphoria of life behind the Veil. How does the process of masking manifest musically, and what musical spaces does the Veil inhabit?



Lyrics of Love and Laughter

DIFFERENCES.

MY neighbor lives on the hill,
And I in the valley dwell,
My neighbor must look down on me,
Must I look up? — ah, well,
My neighbor lives on the hill,
And I in the valley dwell.

My neighbor reads, and prays,
And I — I laugh, God wot,
And sing like a bird when the grass is green
In my small garden plot;
But ah, he reads and prays,
And I — I laugh, God wot.

His face is a book of woe,
And mine is a song of glee;
A slave he is to the great "They say,"
But I — I am bold and free;
No wonder he smacks of woe,
And I have the tang of glee.

84

Lyrics of Love and Laughter

My neighbor thinks me a fool,
"The same to yourself," say I;
"Why take your books and take your prayers,
Give me the open sky;"
My neighbor thinks me a fool,
"The same to yourself," say I.

LONG AGO.

DE ol' time 's gone, de new time 's hyeah
Wid all hits fuss an' feddahs;
I done fu'got de joy an' cheah
We knowed all kin's o' weddahs,
I done fu'got each ol'-time hymn
We ust to sing in meetin';
I 's leahned de prah's, so neat an' trim,
De preachah keeps us 'peatin'.

Hang a vine by de chimney side,
An' one by de cabin do';
An' sing a song fu' de day dat died,
De day of long ergo.

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Figure 4.1: Text of "Differences" from Lyrics of Love and Laughter published 1908.[21]

The lyrical nature of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry led a slew of composers to take interest, including several contemporaries and friends of Florence Price. [22] Price took interest in the poem entitled "Differences" from Dunbar's *Lyrics of Love and Laughter* (see Figure 4.1). This volume was published in 1908—four years after his mature work *Lyrics of the Hearthside.*[23] This volume also includes "Lil' Gal," a love poem written in black vernacular dialect. This volume fully encapsulates Dunbar's narrative scope from the intensely intimate, to sophisticated criticism of white supremacy. Price renames her piece "My Neighbor," centering the antagonist of the narrative.

The speaker of the poem insists on the dichotomous relationship between neighbor and self. From the outset, this situates the speaker in relation to a more privileged other ("My neighbor lives on the hill, And I in the valley dwell").

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[21] Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Lyrics of Love and Laughter*, 1st ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1903), https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc1.0022495274;view=1up;seq=9, 84-85.

[22] Benjamin Griffith Brawley, *Paul Laurence Dunbar: Poet of His People*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 113.

[23] Ibid., 112.

Dunbar, however, subverts the narrative of the tragic plantation Negro, and dares to assert that the speaker is in reality more content in their life. The simultaneous requisite of the presumably black speaker's ego existing in reference to a white other's perception ("My neighbor must look down on me") and the parallel pressure of Negro uplift ("Must I look up?") engages directly with the idea of double consciousness. Thus, an informed reader is able to perceive two parallel narratives.

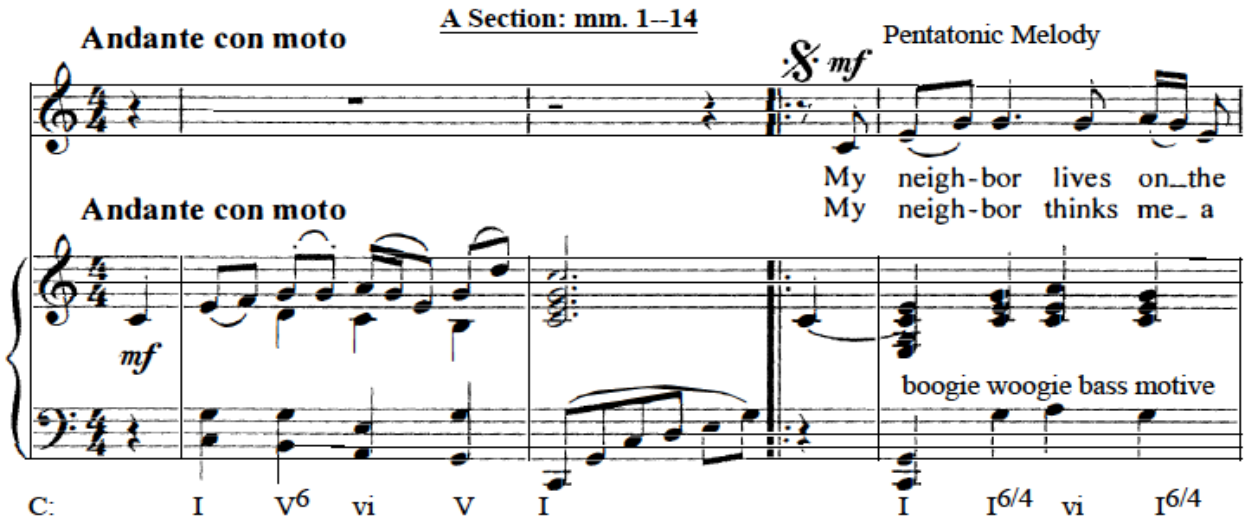
The first narrative is that a black man, downtrodden as he may be by white supremacy, has the power to reclaim joy by means of self-affirmation. Through this lens, the pithy statement "My neighbor thinks me a fool, 'The same to yourself,' I say" is a moment of literary activism. The black man speaking through the lens of self-determination can assert a reality of equality that does not yet exist. This speaker claims the power to make valleys into hills by redefining their place in society through self-determination. Dunbar goes so far as to even call the privileged antagonist a "slave" to "the great 'They say,'" meaning a slave to the idiocy of white supremacist rhetoric.

The second narrative is subtler and manifests in rhetorical details. This narrative's subject acknowledges and suffers from the insipid disease of racism. This voice cannot argue, for it lives within the subconscious. For example, the neighbor "lives" on a hill whereas the speaker "dwells" in the valley. The use of "dwell" connotes a passive existence forced upon the speaker. They may tarry in the valley, but do not fully thrive there. Dunbar expertly exploits the idea of masking as he makes frequent references to laughter. Through this narrative lens, laughing is not glee at self-determination, but a mask worn so that one may survive the ever-oppressive white gaze. The images of the laughing, gleeful, singing coon belong to the realm of minstrelsy, but live on in the white imagination. The poet strikes a contrast between the neighbor's face that resembles a "book of woe," and the speakers face which is a "song of glee."

Dunbar employs these familiar images to not only refer to the white imagination of simple Negro life, but to also point out the falsity of gleeful mask—the Veil separating black ego from the dangerous white imagination. Florence Price responds to Dunbar's masking techniques by sounding a removal of the mask—a brief fracture of the Veil.

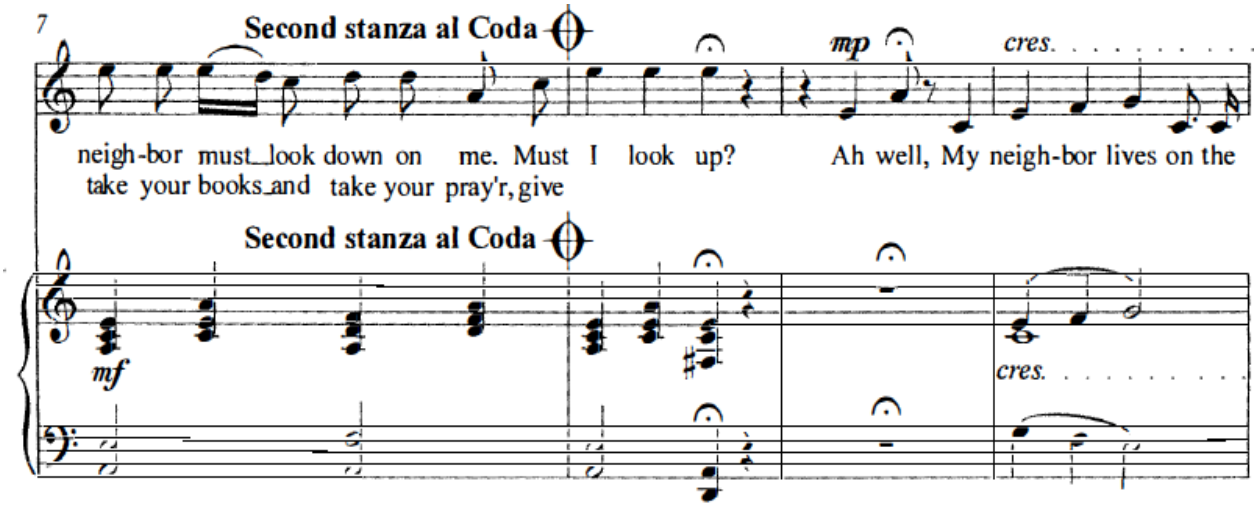
"Difference" or "My Neighbor" by Florence Price appeared in her personal album of songs entitled *Songs to 1940*. As I previously established, Price's practice was to document all of her compositions in presumably performable form regardless of publication. The piece entitled "My Neighbor" in Heard's volume is the first published edition of this manuscript. Price made corrective markings in red pencil, and this particular manuscript contains more corrections than most. This may indicate that she continued to come back to this piece over the years to make corrections. However, Joseph Charles Thomas did perform the piece on March 10, 1940 as indicated by Price's markings at the end of her song album. It is impossible to discern the nature of the corrections, since she did not date her editorial markings. The score I will utilize for analysis is Heard's, which captures the corrections in red pencil and is more legible. Price's setting of the text interweaves musical materials that signify Afrological ideas with extreme moments of harmonic instability.

Price establishes the blackness of her chosen sound world with the use of a pentatonic theme in her short prelude and vocal entrance (see Example 4.1). It is noteworthy that pentatonicism is subverted by the appearance of F natural, but the F natural disappears in the vocal melody. At the outset, she indicates a subtle masking gesture.



Example 4.1: "My Neighbor" (mm. 1—3)[24]

The RH piano part at the first vocal entrance emulates a repeating boogie-woogie bass line—a genre readily available in 1930s Chicago. The melody continues the pentatonic theme, and builds in tension as the line gradually climbs to repeated E-naturals on "Must I look up?" (see Example 4.2) This particular tessitura marks a register shift for male and female voice types, thereby nesting a bit of fragility into the image of looking up.



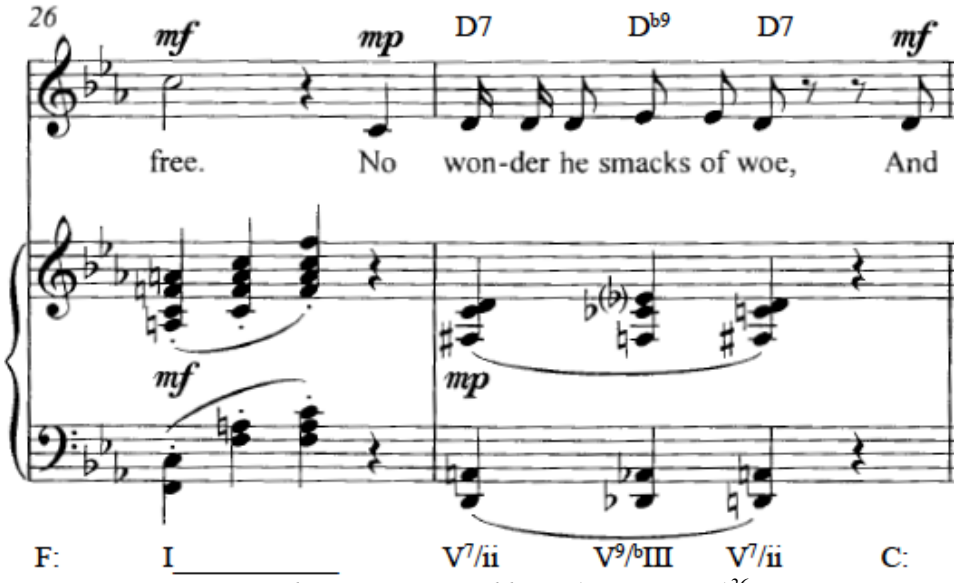
Example 4.2: "My Neighbor" (mm. 7—10)[25]

[24] Florence B. Price, *44 Art Songs and Spirituals: Medium/High Voice*, ed. Richard Heard (Fayetteville, AR: ClarNan Editions, 2015), 75.

[25] Ibid.

Other than this moment, though, the harmonic landscape is repetitive, predictable, and even safe. It is a poignant choice that Price chooses the pentatonic and boogie-woogie inflected music to introduce the mask, as it codes the masking mechanism as black. This, of course, supports the minstrel masking narrative.

After the initial masking and establishment of the first consciousness, Price begins to introduce ways in which the mask begins to dematerialize. One choice is the use of unaccompanied text. For example, "Ah well" in m. 9 is the first time the repetitive harmonic structure dissipates leaving only the subject to speak (Example 4.2). A similar moment occurs in m. 26. Here, "No" is unaccompanied at a critical harmonic moment, once again emphasizing the disillusion of living behind the Veil (see Example 4.3).

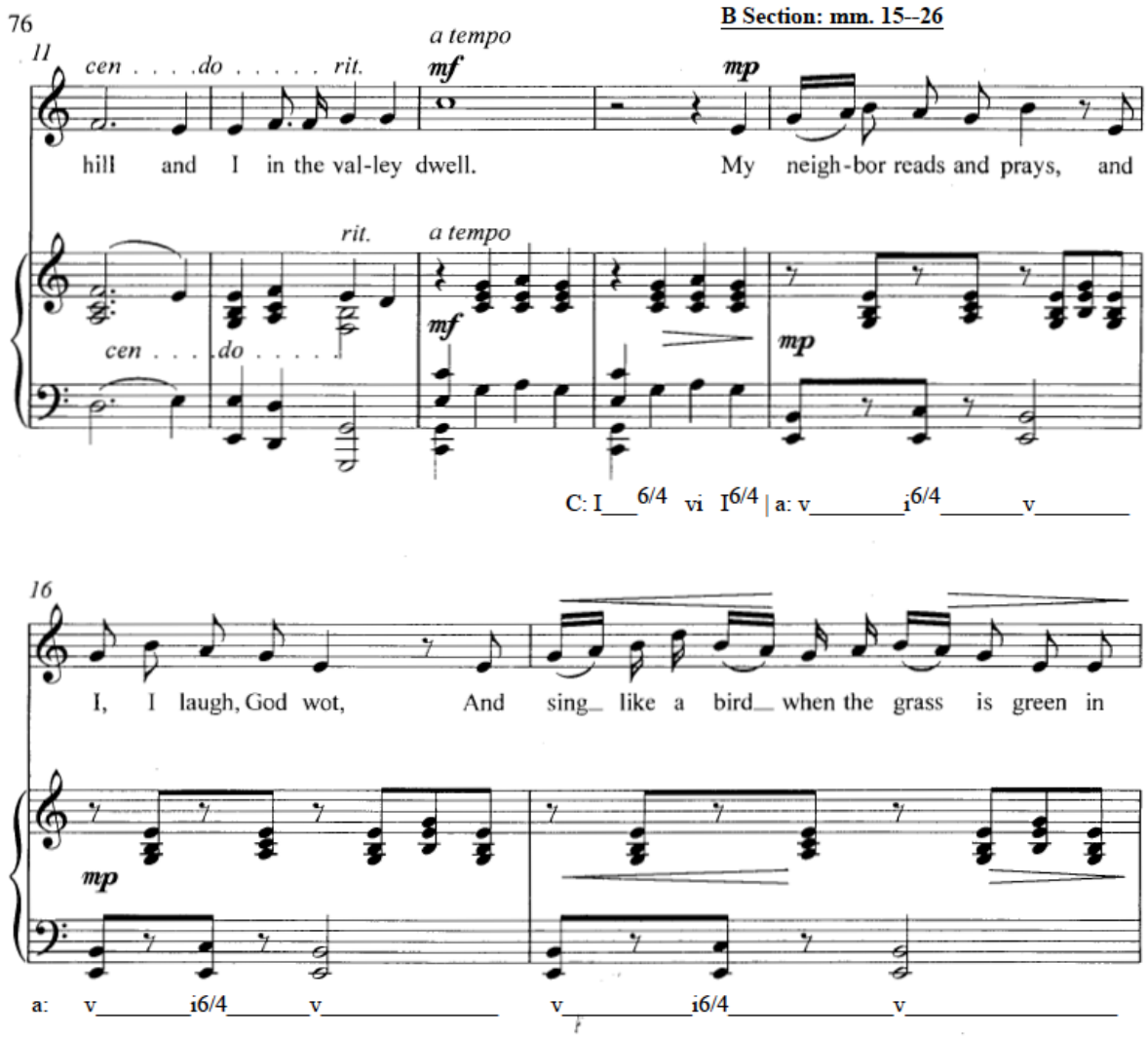


Example 4.3: "My Neighbor" (mm. 26—27)[26]

Perhaps the most fascinating way in which Price shows the fragile duality of the speaker's consciousness is in the harmonic trajectory of the song. The piece begins in C major and the harmony remains diatonic through m. 14 (see Example 4.1).

[26] Ibid., 77.

I call this the A section, which also aligns with the first stanza of text. In m. 15, the first direct modulation occurs. The first of these is not too jarring, since it is only moving to the relative minor key (see Example 4.4). The progression v-i6/4-v introduces instability, depriving the listener of a satisfactory cadence in A minor. However, Price still treats this as an ostinato, subverting the safety of the first boogie-woogie ostinato.

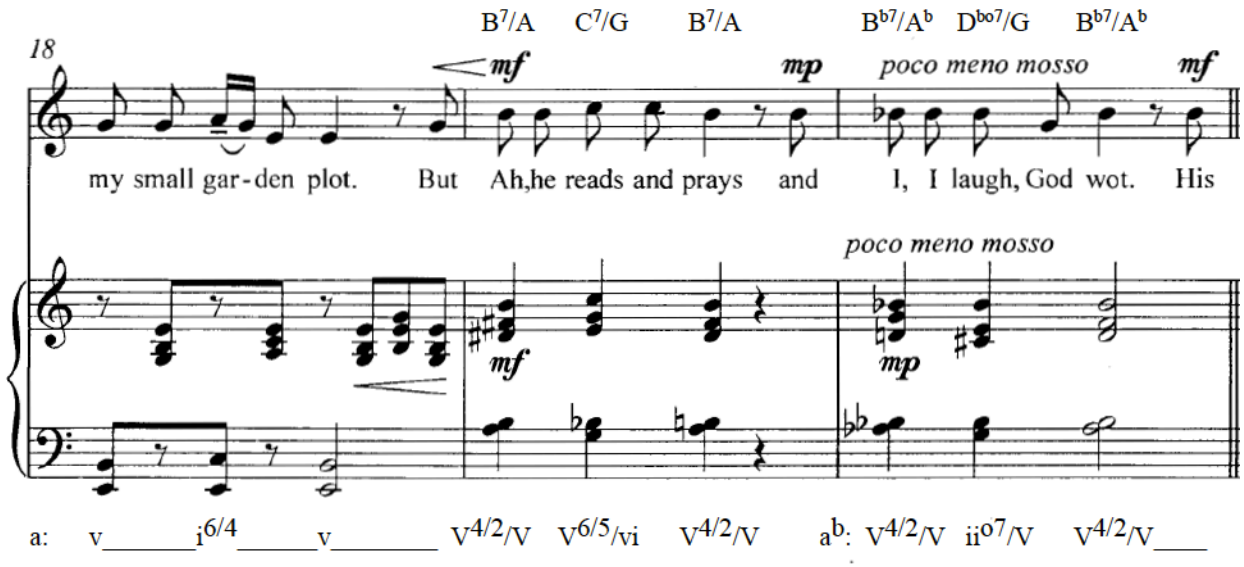


Example 4.4: "My Neighbor" (mm. 11—17)[27]

[27] Ibid., 76.

The choice of a minor key to accompany "And sing like a bird when the grass is green" reveals Price's reading of the subtext that Dunbar implies. The composer sees the laughter as a mask and gives the listener a chance to hear behind the facade of deceptive words. The aural dysphoria of mounting harmonic instability with text that evokes glee reflects the bifurcated and blurry lens through which black folk view themselves in white dominated society.

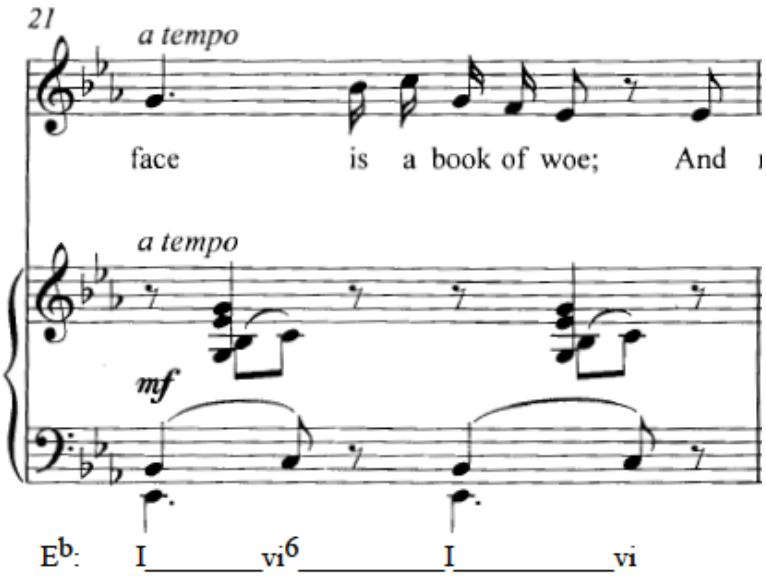
The harmony becomes increasingly chromatic as the narrative continues in the B section. At "But Ah, he reads and prays, and I, I laugh, God wot," Price composes a chain of dominant chords (B7/A, C7/G, B7/A) that are not directly related to the key of A-minor (see Example 4.5). The progression challenges the strictures of diatonic convention based on the progression of dominant to tonic. However, jazz theory is based on harmonic extension and the use of dominant and minor sevenths to bridge gaps between distant keys. This leads to a use of harmony focused on sonority, rather than progression. In this case, Roman Numeral analysis tells little about the harmonic landscape.



Example 4.5: "My Neighbor" (mm.18—20)[28]

[28] Ibid.

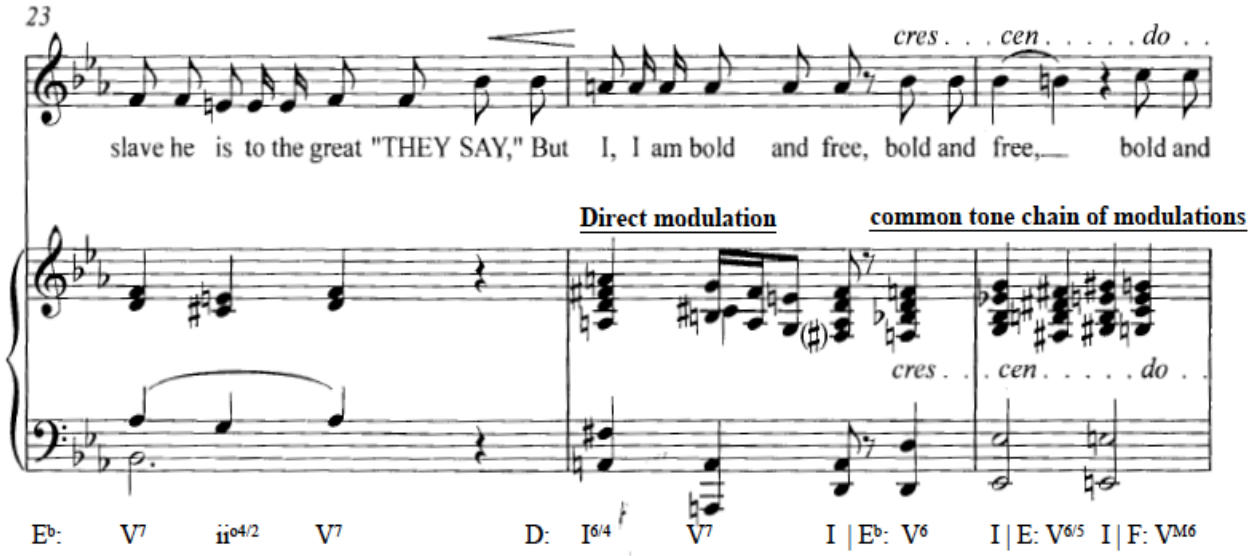
The pattern varies in m. 20, with the outer chords down a semitone and the middle chord becoming diminished. It is unclear what the key of the section is until a clear direct modulation to E-flat major in m. 21 (see Example 4.6).



Example 4.6: "My Neighbor" (m. 21)[29]

Price composes a chord progression that tonicizes the dominant of A-flat minor in m. 20. Thus, the composer prepares the listener aurally for the eventual clear establishment of E-flat major through dominant and predominant harmonies. Price uses the unprepared B-flat dominant chord to finally establish E-flat as the tonic. As the subject compares their face to the other, harmonic tension momentarily settles. This event suggests the fracture of the Veil has stopped—that perhaps the subject is struggling to maintain their mask. However, a change occurs when in m. 24 Price modulates to D major (see Example 4.7). The subject cries out "I am bold and free, bold and free."

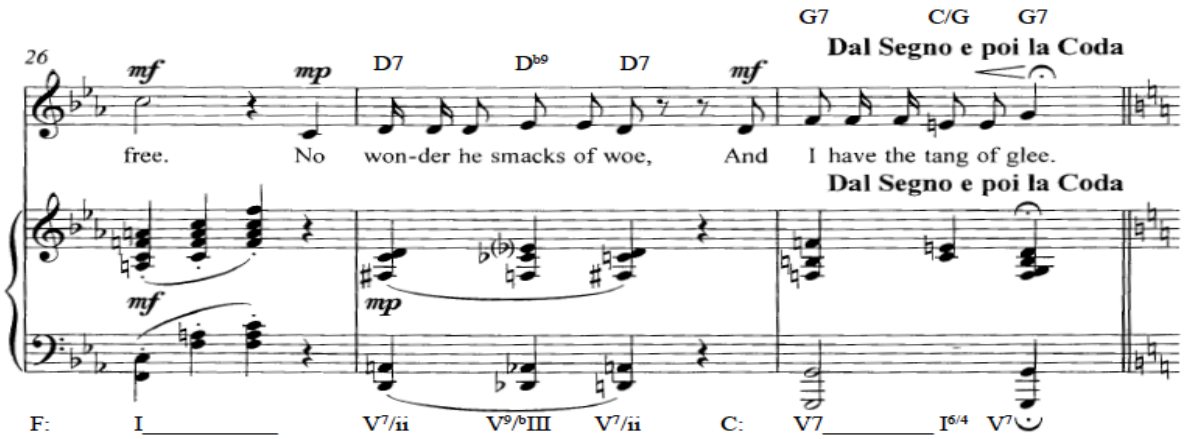
[29] Ibid., 77.



Example 4.7: "My Neighbor" (mm. 23—25)[30]

Price alters the text here to repeat twice, transforming this text into a desperate outcry for self-determination. The chain of dominant chord modulations in mm. 24—25 that settles into F major in m. 26 ignores Western harmonic conventions. Price is clearly shading harmonies from dark to light (B-flat major to C major), and it is aurally apparent that something is being conquered. Price follows this harmonic strife and heroic unmasking with a codetta at "No wonder he smacks of woe" (see Example 4.8).

[30] Ibid.

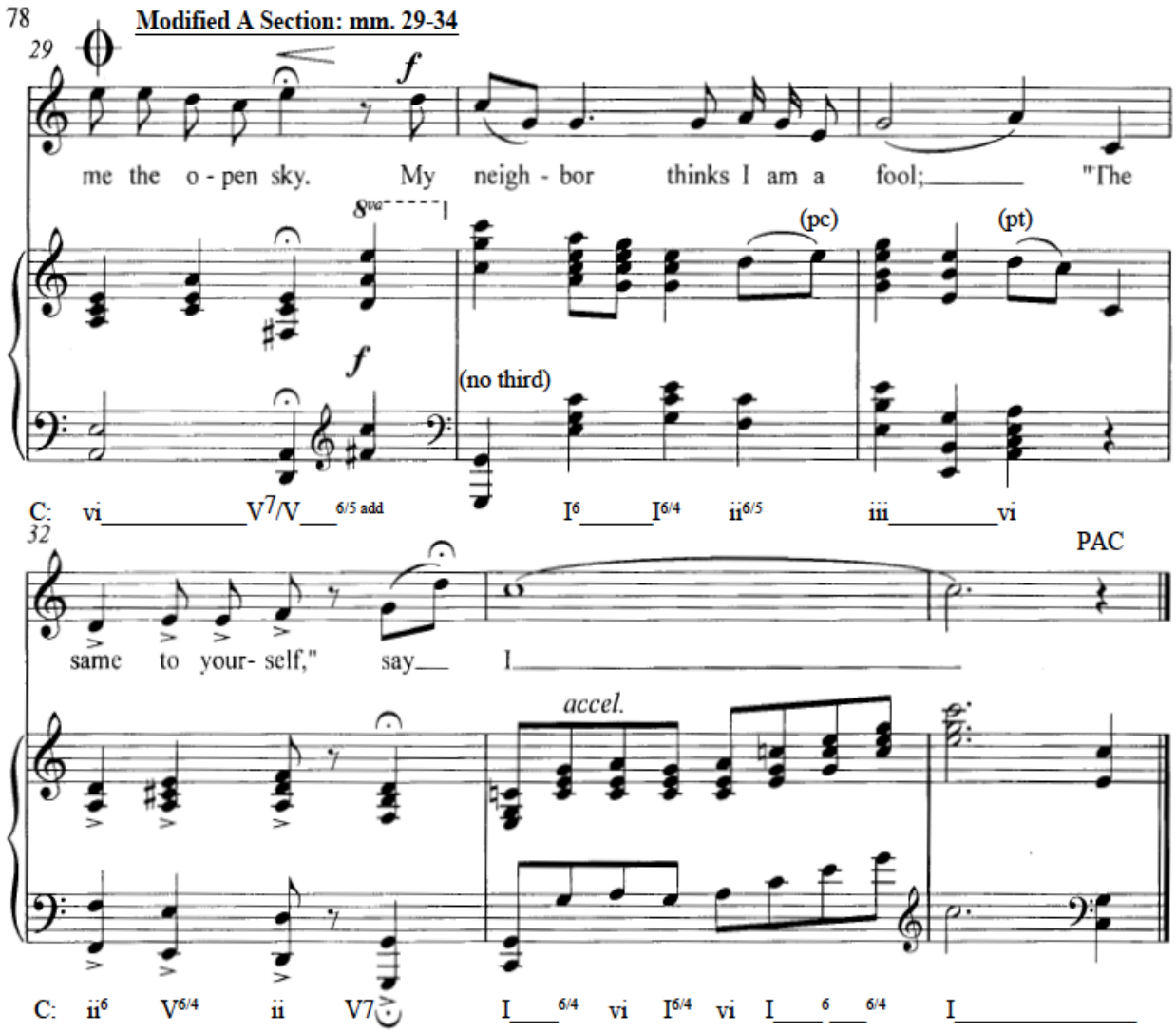


Example 4.8: "My Neighbor" (mm. 26—28)[31]

The chromatic oscillation of these dominant sonorities paints the woe described in the text. The text "smacks of woe" stands in stark contrast to the "tang of glee," as the composer leads back to C major using the aurally comforting G dominant.

After the second verse, the coda manifests as a modified return of the A section (see Example 4.9). The smile once donned by a masked subject is now a defiant smile of self-determination. The speaker's final acclamation "'The same to yourself,' say I" has gravitas. The depth of expression here is reinforced by the accent marks in m. 32, as well as the heroic ascending perfect fifth on "say" (Example 4.19). The chordal postlude firmly establishes C major, and finally provides the listener with a satisfying perfect authentic cadence.

[31] Ibid.



Example 4.9: "My Neighbor" (mm. 29—34)[32]

Florence Price presents a nuanced reading of Dunbar's poem "Differences." The masking and unmasking gestures are so clearly painted by the harmonic choices she makes. Just as Du Bois suggested in *The Souls of Black Folk*, the stress of the two warring consciousnesses threatens a breach. Price sounds this breach by engaging with discontinuity and harmonic flight as topics.

[32] Ibid., 78.

The discontinuities experienced in the B section serve the deep expressive purpose of evoking the psychological trauma of life behind the Veil. Price's "My Neighbor" forces the listener to hear the two conflicting narratives simultaneously, while challenging the limitations of diatonic harmony to fully express the trauma of black life. It is clear by the end of "My Neighbor" that a black nationalist musical paradigm challenges deeply held biases on the fertile battleground of emotional expression.

Afterword: Towards a New American Musical Canon

What I have presented in these pages represents my attempt to decolonize the lens through which scholars and performers view the classical works of black composers. By exploring the art songs of Florence B. Price through multiple critical lenses, I hope that it becomes apparent that her songs in particular are ripe with communicative depth and rich in musical intelligence. My critical exploration began as a mere question: "Why have I never heard of African Americans' contributions to art song in my song literature coursework?" After much independent research and my subsequent involvement with the National Association of Negro Musicians, I was exposed to a vibrant community of African American musical professionals dedicated to preserving the works of African American composers of classical music. I would like to think that the ability for such organizations to affirm the work of black artists is what led Florence B. Price to become involved with NANM during her lifetime.

After this exploration, one must ask "What should be the next steps?" "Where do we go from here?" I will end this present work by proposing further steps in Florence Price research, with the goal being re-defining our concept of American music from classroom to concert hall. The thoughts that follow represent my informed opinions about the state of black studies musicology and diversity in vocal performance.

Opening the Concert Hall

I have been encouraged by a recent recording projects featuring premieres of music by Price and other African American composers. My recent review of Er-Gene Kahng and the Janacek Philharmonic's recordings of the Price Violin Concerto Nos. 1 and 2 was an indication of my joy that Price's music was being expertly revived by another woman of color.[1]

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[1] Marquese Carter, "Florence Price—Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2," *Black Grooves*, Bloomington, IN, 2018, http://blackgrooves.org/florence-price-violin-concertos-nos-1-and-2/.

Concert pianist Samantha Ege recently released an album entitled *Four Women: Music for Solo Piano by Price, Kapralova, Bilsland & Bonds* features Price's *Sonata in E Minor* and Margaret Bonds's *Troubled Water*.[2] Florence Price is beginning to receive the renown she so deserves, and the time is ripe for recording her expansive song catalog.

I advocate for continued recording projects featuring works by composers on the margins. Artists such as Darryl Taylor and Louise Toppin have been avid champions of songs by African American composers. Darryl Taylor particularly has championed the works of the late Robert Owens, III.[3] The New Black Music Repertory Ensemble housed at the Center for Black Music Research has been instrumental in presenting recordings of black composers' music. Nathaniel Meyer and the Du Bois Orchestra at Harvard have committed to presenting concerts of American composers across all cultural divides.[4] The development of more orchestras dedicated to queer, Latinx, and female composers would help to gradually change the artistic landscape of the United States for the better.

I have begun talks with singers and recording engineers to prepare a recording of selected songs from Heard's volume to record on CD. The next step is to seek sponsorship for the costs of recording and distribution. The goal of the project is not only to encourage performance of works by Florence Price, but to also provide a model for recording projects of other Negro Renaissance era composers.

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[2] Samantha Ege, pianist, *Sonata in E Minor*, by Florence Price, n.d., Tracks 1-3 on *Four Women,* Wave Theory Records, 2018, compact disc, http://wavetheoryrecords.com/album/four-women/.

[3] Composer Robert Owens has the most expansive catalog of Langston Hughes settings. Darryl Taylor championed the composers works on his 2007 album entitled "Fields of Wonder: Songs and Spirituals of Robert Owens." On the album, Taylor performed a new arrangement of Owens's *Silver Rain* with string quartet. Taylor is also the founder of the African American Art Song Alliance.

[4] "Du Bois Orchestra: Mission," 2017, https://www.duboisorchestra.org/mission.

The mission of the orchestra is described in relation to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois. The website reads, "Inspired by the work of Harvard alumnus and civil rights icon W.E.B. Du Bois, our mission is to raise awareness on campus about issues of social exclusion in classical music. We in the Du Bois community see music-making and listening not only as a means by which to break down aesthetic stereotypes but as a model for constructive societal dialogue. The Du Bois Orchestra at Harvard engages in community outreach and educational programming as a recognized student organization through the Harvard Graduate School of Education."

The Voice Studio

My experience as a student of classical music has been one on the margins. Throughout my musical career, several times I have been the only black student in my voice studio and my academic courses. I attribute this disparity of black folk in postsecondary music education not only to the startling lack of black faculty representation, but to professors' lack of access to reputable resources for interpreting the works of composers on the margins. If students cannot sing or perform music that reflects their lived experience, the act of performance becomes a self-effacing ritual.

In response to this disparity, I argue that academe must continue to fund researchers exploring composers (and scholars) on the margins. For voice departments, this means investigating our repertoire and jury requirements, as well as examining the diversity of cultures represented in our faculties. The publication of critical performing editions of manuscripts will empower voice teachers to teach diverse repertoire with the support of solid scholarship.

Florence B. Price has more than 50 unpublished and complete manuscripts available through the University of Arkansas Special Collections. I am pursuing funding to sponsor the publication of performing editions of the complete Price art song catalog. Along with editorial markings, I will venture to provide multiple performance keys to make the volumes voice studio friendly. It is heartening that Price set a variety of compelling poets, including Lord Byron, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Langston Hughes. She also set lesser known female poets, many of whom appear to be friends of the composer.[5]

The Richard Heard edition of Florence Price's "Beside the Sea" presents an interesting editorial issue that I will discuss in a future publication.[6]

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[5] For example, Sal Janeway Carroll whom I mentioned in Chapter 2.

[6] The version of "Beside the Sea" that appears in *44 Art Songs* departs drastically from the manuscript housed at the University of Arkansas Special Collections. After discussing this with Barbara Garvey Jackson, the owner of ClarNan Editions, she suggested that the manuscript that Heard referred to may be the one held at the Marian Anderson Collection of Music Manuscripts (Penn Libraries). I plan to investigate the process of editing and correspondence in which Price and Anderson engaged.

Problems such as those presented by Heard's score could be easily remedied with a more critical approach focused on compositional process and Price's process of performance score preparation. Readily available scores will not only assist in diversifying our approach to voice pedagogy, but will encourage a widening door to the concert hall.

Furthering Florence Price Studies

Florence Price has slowly entered the spotlight of musicological inquiry. The abrupt passing of Rae Linda Brown has put a hold on what promised to be a superior biography of Florence Price.[7] Scholars including Douglas Shadle, Ayana Smith, Kori Hill, and others have discovered the works of Price, and have questioned her place in American musicology. I am particularly interested in Price's use of chromaticism—how it looks forward to modernism, while expressing her own unique aesthetic. As I have delved into the composer's songs, I have begun to wonder if chromaticism has a different meaning entirely when used by Price. Scholars must begin to question how the experimental and chromatic language of Negro Renaissance composers sound a particular American experience—a particular era of American musical production. Florence B. Price died before reaching her goal of having a European premiere—a premiere that, in the minds of black intelligentsia, equated to the actualization of black uplift. She is finally experiencing the level of fame for which she strived so doggedly during her lifetime. May we change the pattern of canonization in academe, the concert hall, and in our personal interactions. It is only by recognizing the errors of the past that we can prevent such negligence in the future.

It is only by centering underrepresented composers that the margins dividing our art form from a diverse American society can finally be erased.

[7] As of now, the status of Brown's biography of Florence Price is unknown. The title has been removed from the publisher's website, perhaps because of disputes over the posthumous rights to the manuscript.

Appendix I: Full Score of "Sympathy"

In Memory of Dr. Richard Heard[1]

[1] Florence B. Price, *44 Art Songs and Spirituals: Medium/High Voice*, ed. Richard Heard (Fayetteville, AR: ClarNan Editions, 2015), 119-121.

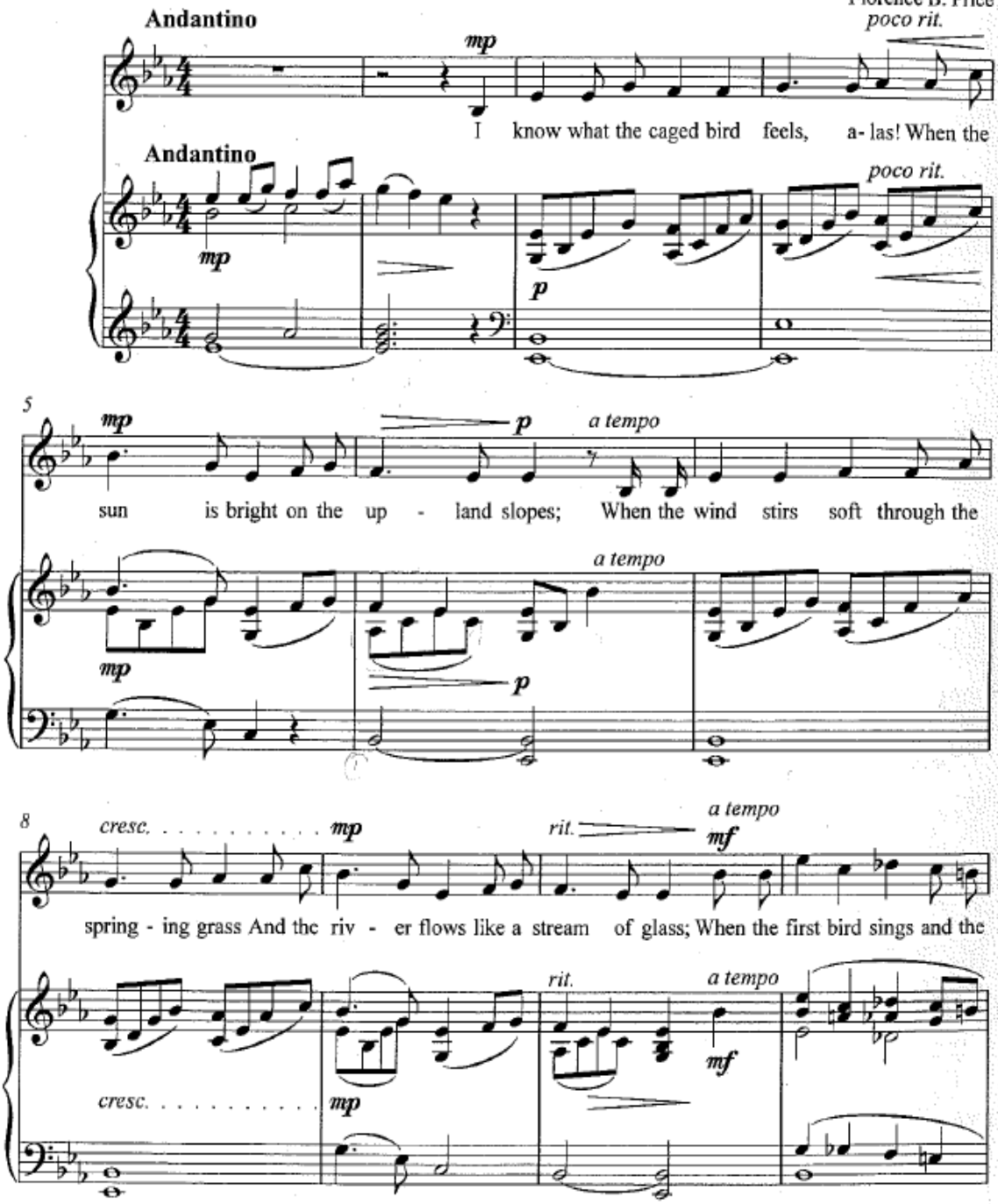
116

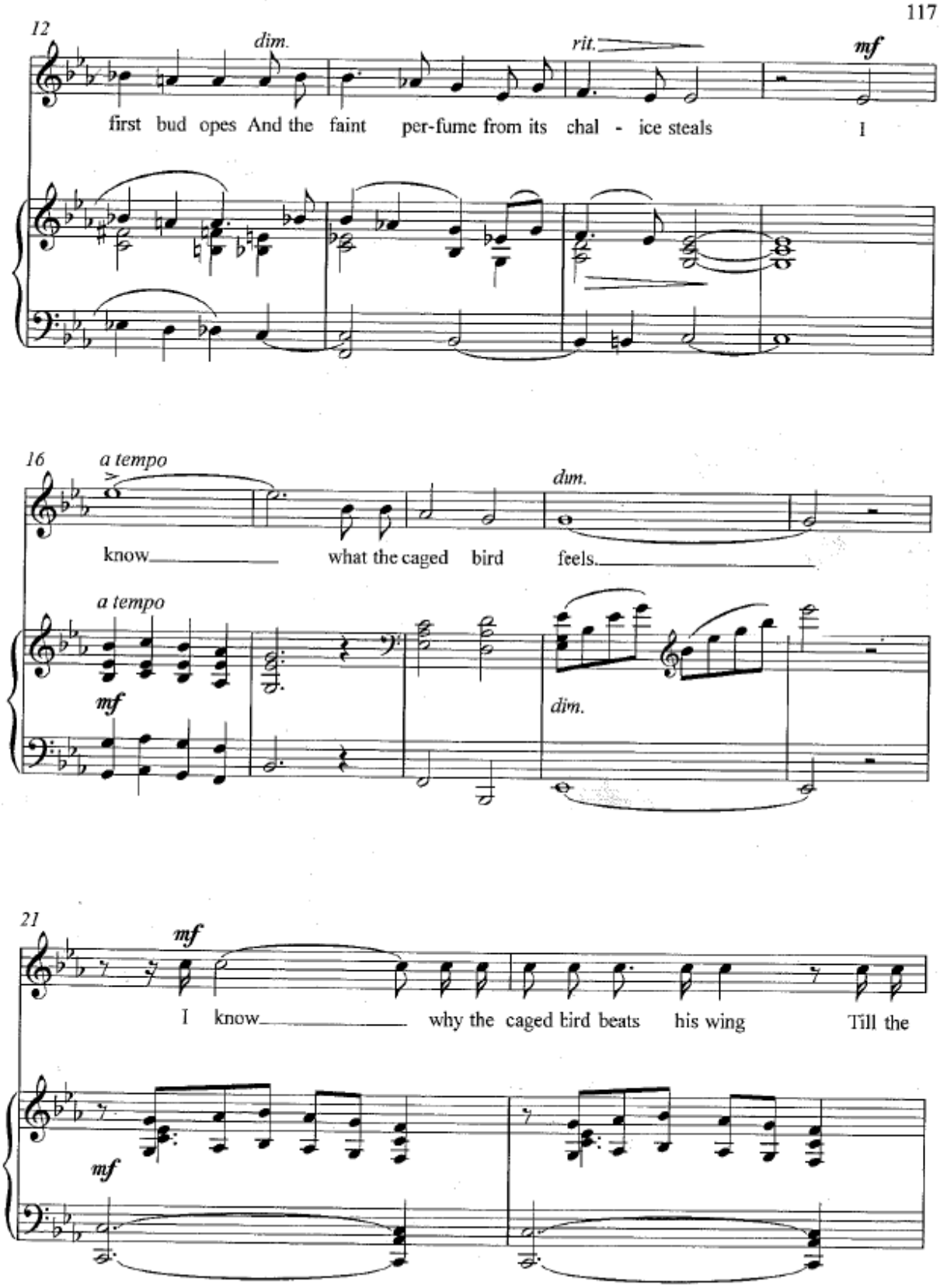
To Florence, my daughter

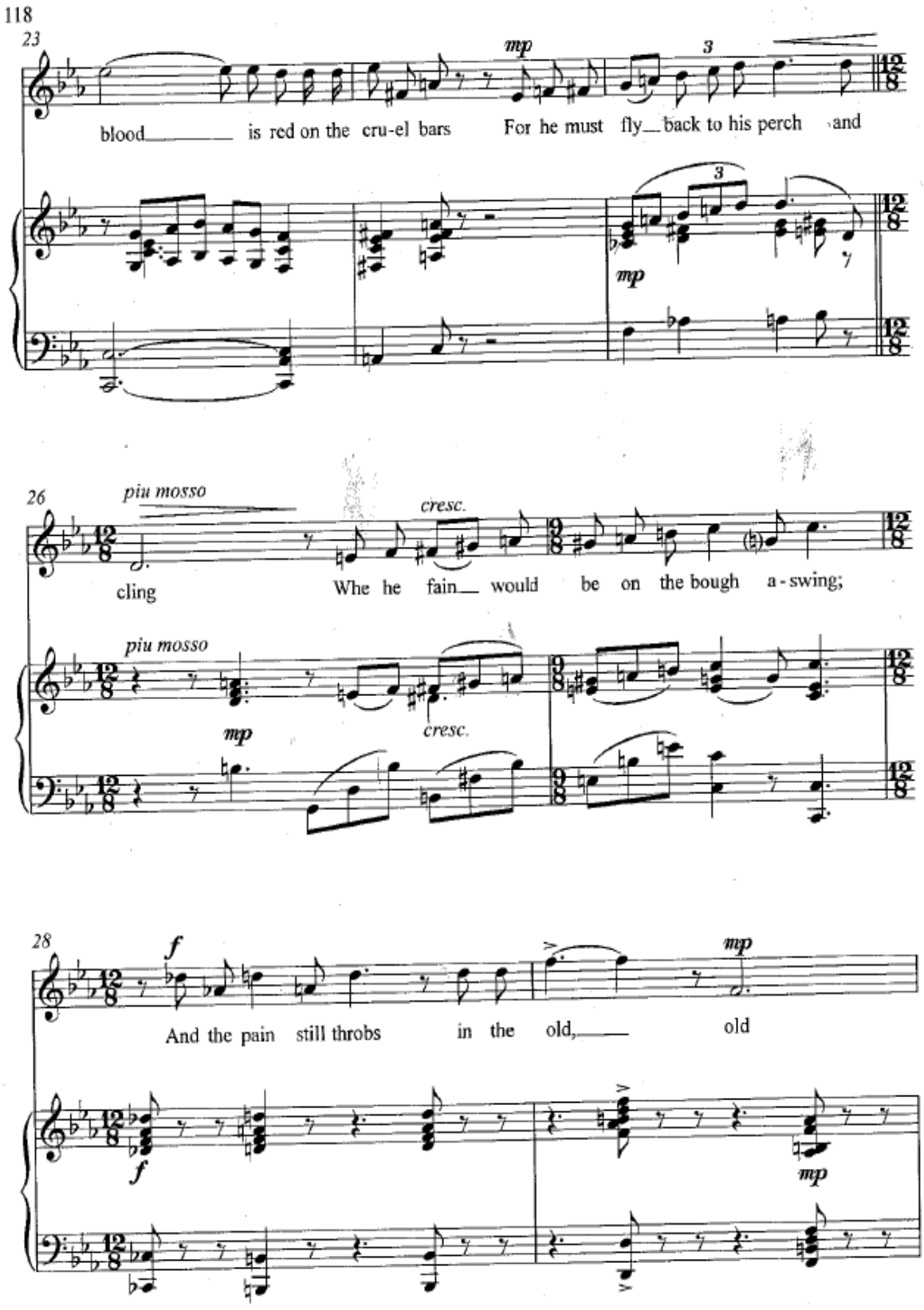
Sympathy

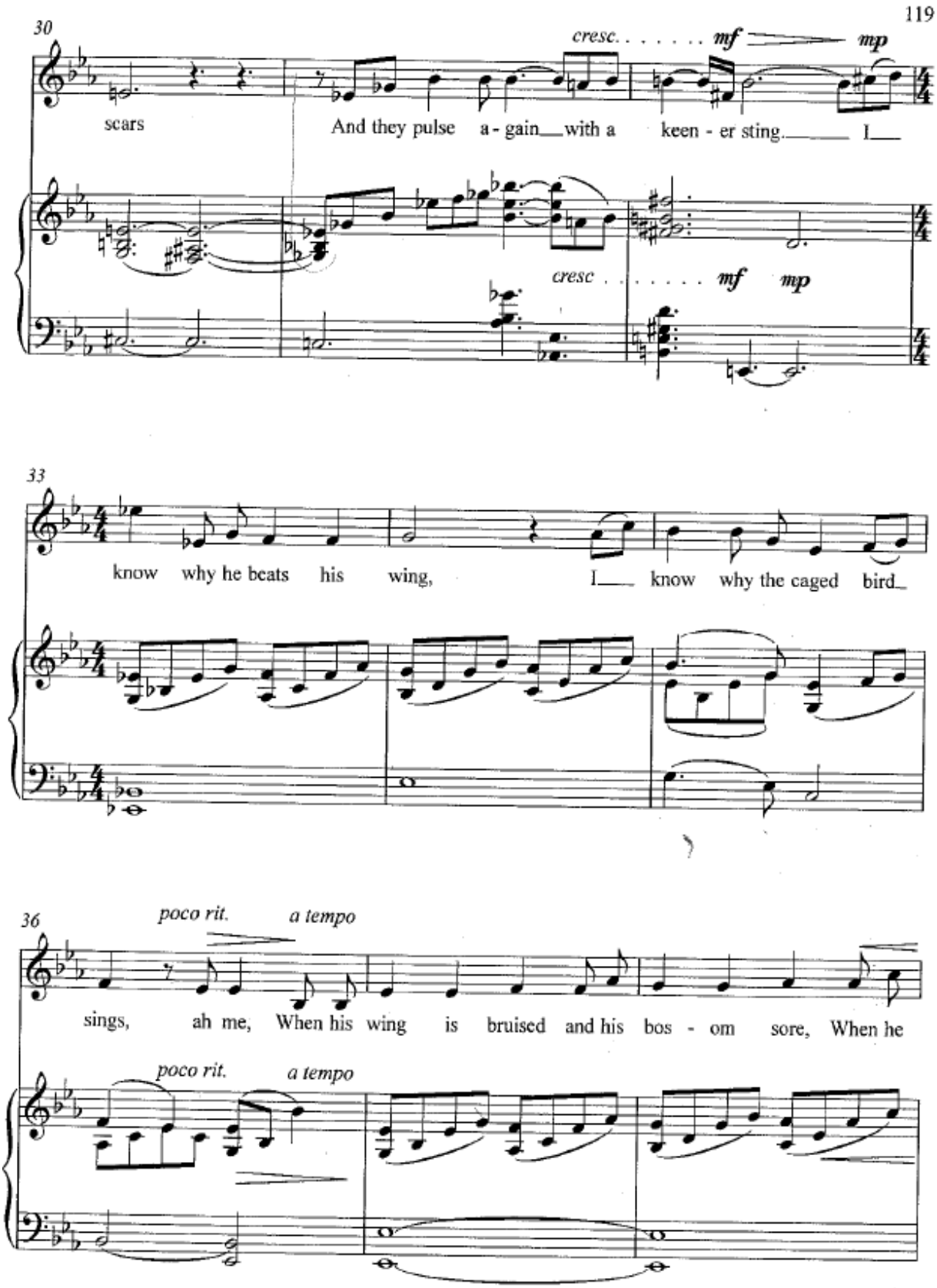
Paul Laurence Dunbar

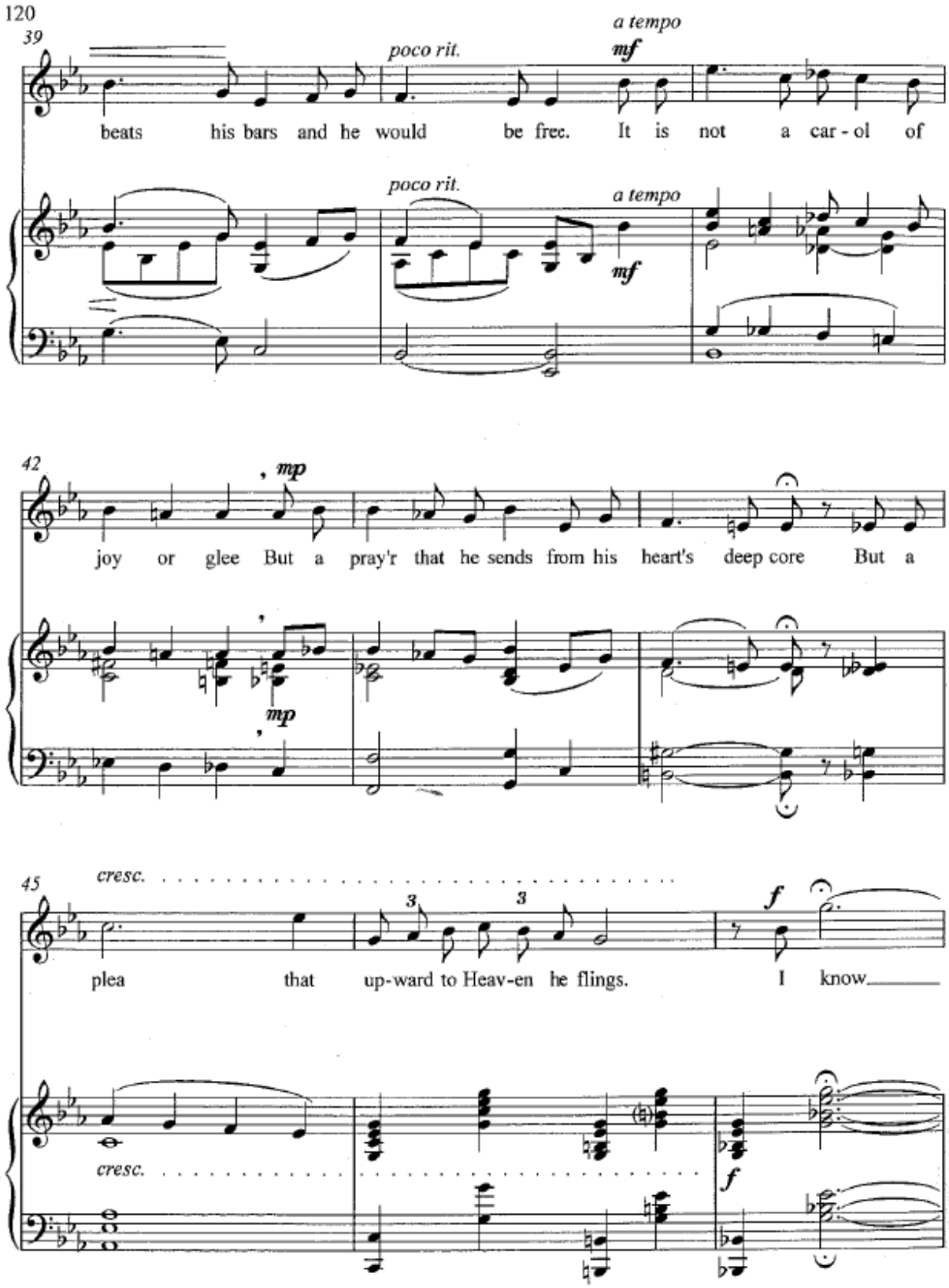
Florence B. Price

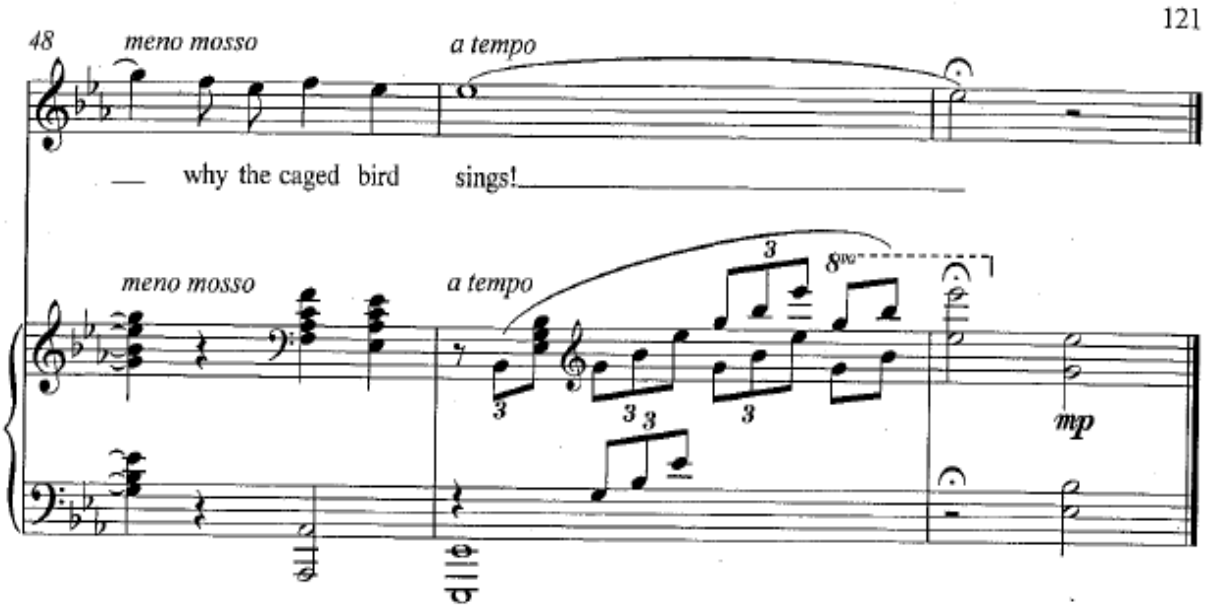



117
12
dim.
rit.
mf
first bud opes And the faint per-fume from its chal - ice steals I
16
a tempo
dim.
know what the caged bird feels.
a tempo
mf
dim.
21
mf
I know why the caged bird beats his wing Till the
mf


118
23
mp
3
blood is red on the cru-el bars For he must fly back to his perch and
mp
26
piu mosso
cresc.
cling Whe he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
piu mosso
mp
cresc.
28
f
mp
And the pain still throbs in the old, old
f
mp

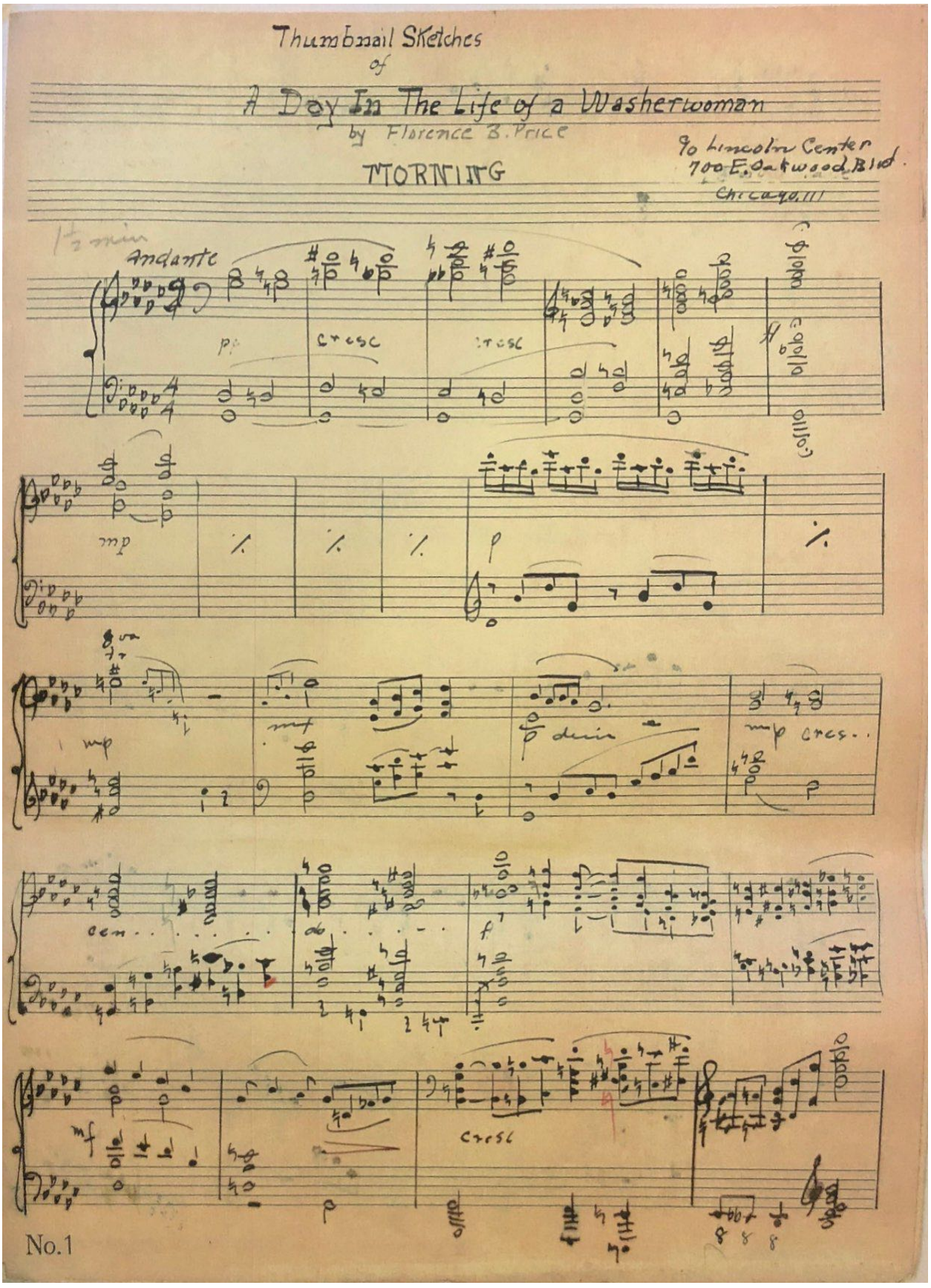

119
30
cresc. . . . . mf mp
scars
And they pulse a - gain with a keen - er sting. I
cresc . . . . . mf mp
33
know why he beats his wing, I know why the caged bird
36
poco rit. a tempo
sings, ah me, When his wing is bruised and his bos - om sore, When he
poco rit. a tempo

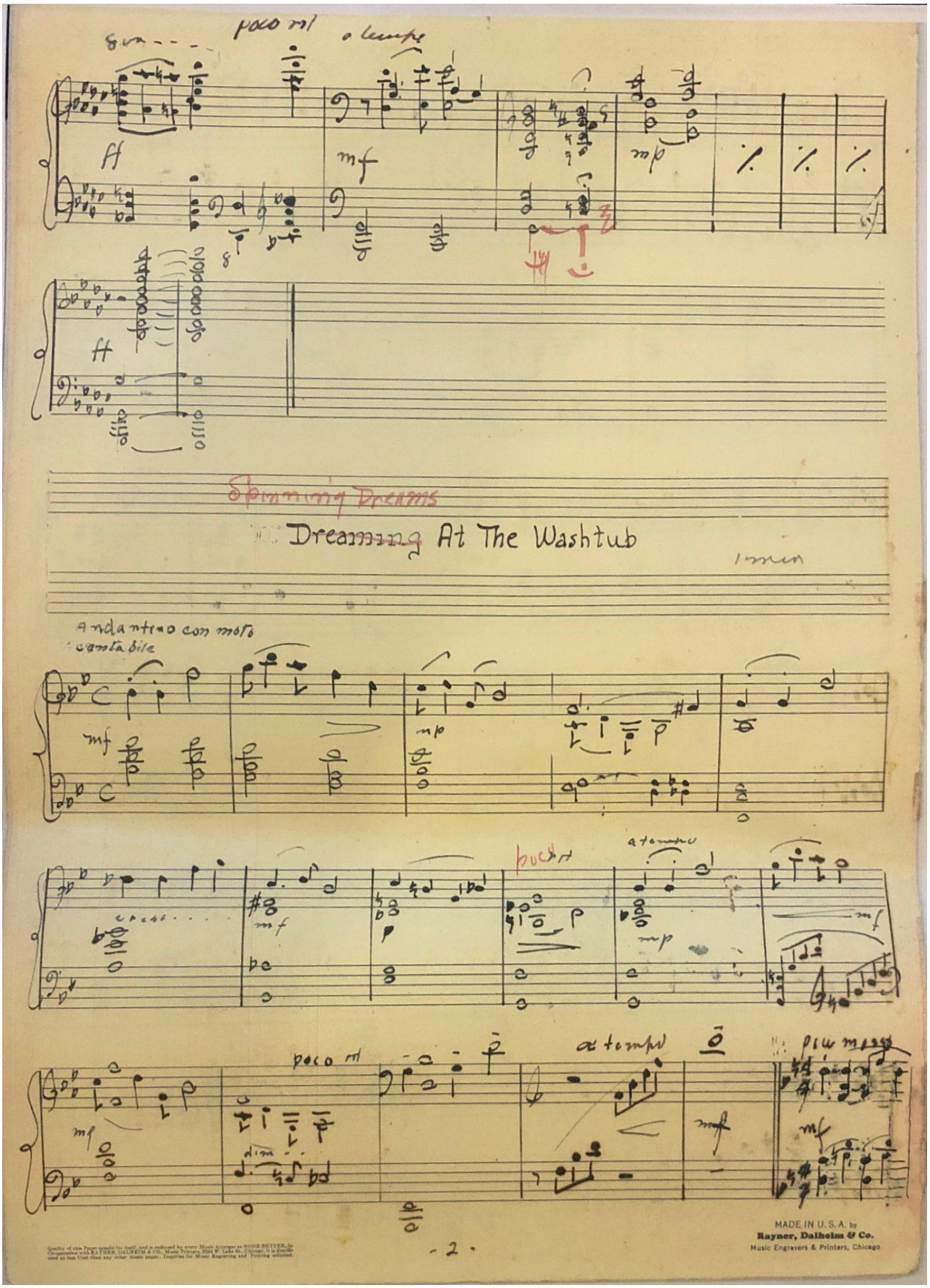

120
39
poco rit.
a tempo
mf
beats his bars and he would be free. It is not a car - ol of
poco rit.
a tempo
mf
42
mp
joy or glee But a pray'r that he sends from his heart's deep core But a
mp
45
cresc.
3
3
f
plea that up-ward to Heav-en he flings. I know
cresc.
f

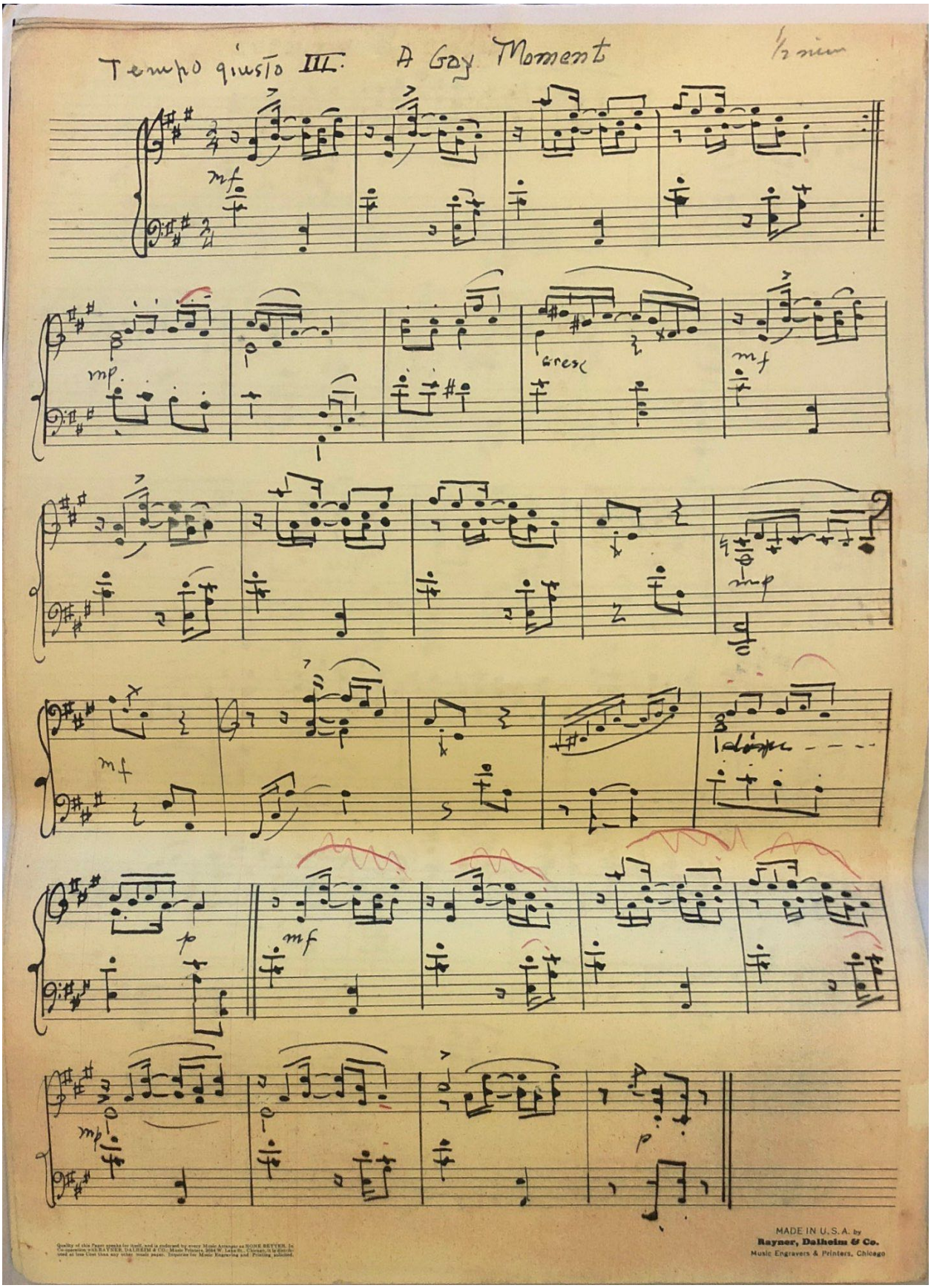

48
meno mosso
a tempo
121
why the caged bird sings!
meno mosso
a tempo
8va
mp

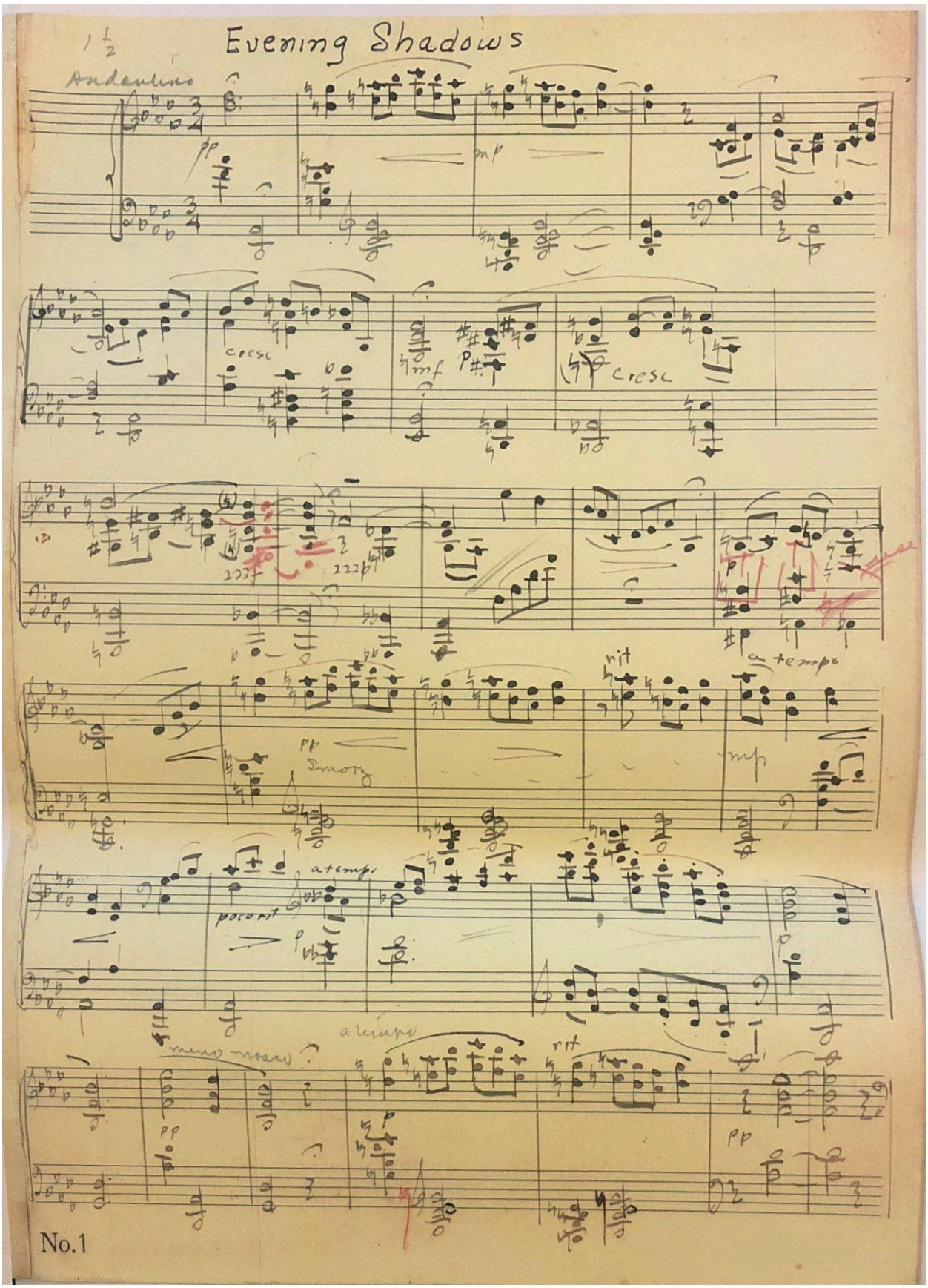
Appendix II: Facsimile of *Thumbnail Sketches of a Day in the Life of a Washerwoman*[1]

[1] Florence Price, *Thumbnail Sketches of a Day in the Life of a Washerwoman*, musical score, Florence Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a), series 2, box 18, folder 19. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.


Thumbnail Sketches
of
A Day In The Life of a Washerwoman
by Florence B. Price
MORNING
c/o Lincoln Center
700 E. Oakwood Blvd.
Chicago, Ill
1½ min
Andante
No.1

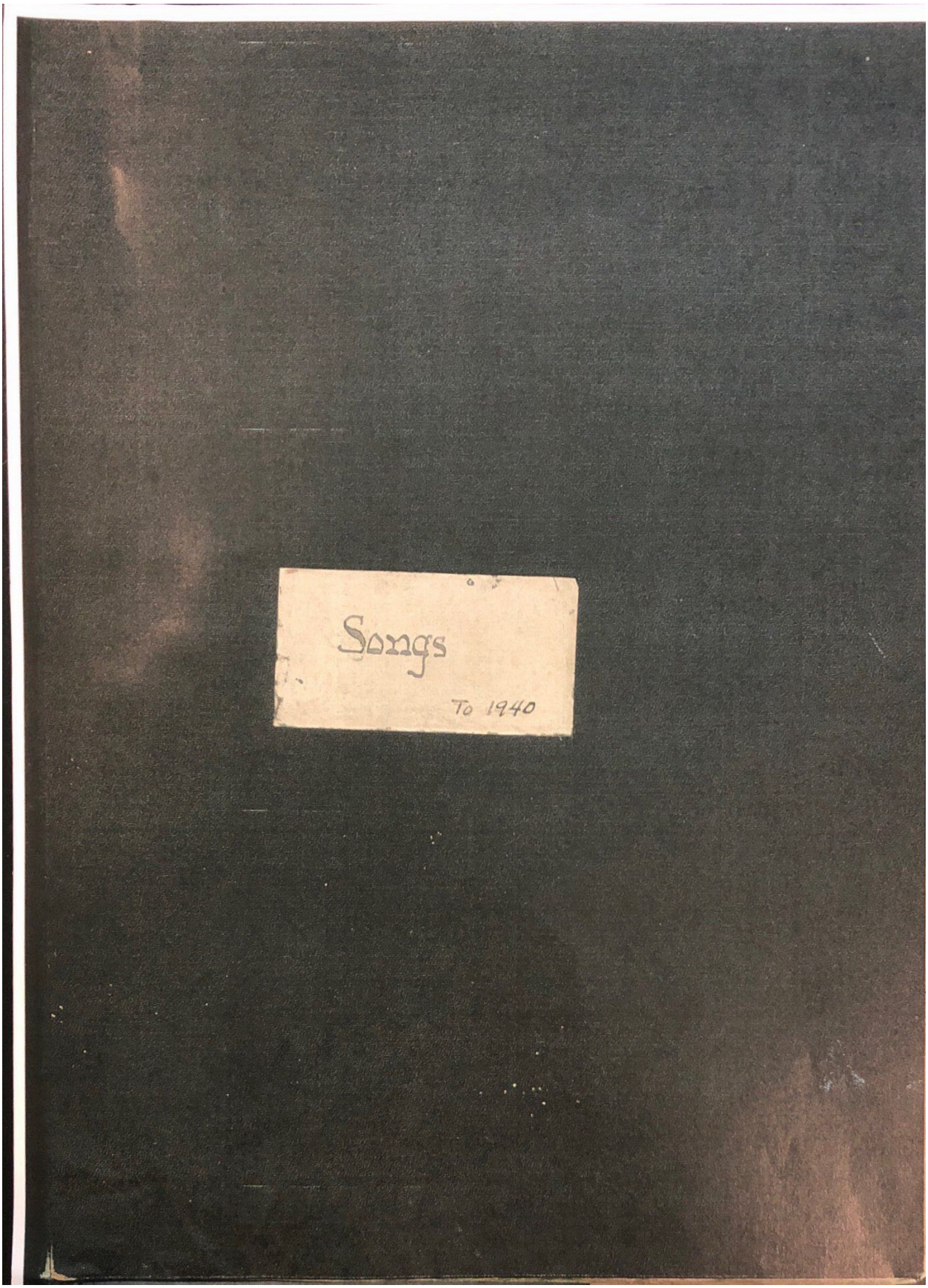

poco rit
a tempo
Spinning Dreams
Dreaming At The Washtub
Andantino con molta cantabile
poco rit
a tempo
MADE IN U.S.A. by
Rayner, Dalheim & Co.
Music Engravers & Printers, Chicago
- 2 -


Tempo giusto III. A Gay Moment
1/2 min
mf
mp
cresc
mf
mp
mf
p
mf
mp
p
MADE IN U.S.A. by
Rayner, Dalheim & Co.
Music Engravers & Printers, Chicago


1½
Evening Shadows
Andantino
pp
mp
cresc
mf
p
cresc
rit
a tempo
pp
Smooth
mp
a tempo
poco rit
p
a tempo
rit
pp
No.1

Appendix III: Facsimile of Front and Back Covers of *Songs to 1940*[1]

[1] Florence Price, *Songs to 1940*, musical score, Florence Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a), series 2, box 14, folder 9. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.


Songs
To 1940

In this volume —

Night
Dream Ships 5/3/35 June 17-19-35
The Glory of the Day is in Her Face Dorothy Maynor
The Dawn's Awake June 19/1935
IF
Resignation
Wander-Thirst M.C. Mar 24, 1938
Wen I Gits Home Jan 1938
The Sum
Trouble Done Come My Way Nov 10-1939
You Wont find a Man Like Jesus Nov 10-1939
The Poet and His Song M.C.
~~The Meeting Waters~~ Gladys Swarthout
I Grew a Rose
Beyond The Years Dorothy Maynor
Forever
Death's Gwineter Lay His Cold Icy Hands On Me
Difference or My Neighbor Mar 18-1937 Jno. Chas. Thomas (also Kator)

Also
Go Down Moses
Beyond the years

Night
Day-Act 1936
Night" - Apr 13, 1937

Or Beside the Sea Gladys Swarthout Apr 12/36

See earlier vol.

Music Views

Marian Anderson

BY EUGENE STINSON

ONE of the factors in making for consummateness in Marian Anderson's artistry is that she knows the essential character of her gift. She has wonderful attributes as an interpreter of songs; she has great personality and she knows how to play upon her public's rapt devotion to all she may do. The fact remains that the phenomenal character of her voice requires that she use it like a virtuoso, for display, and with supreme intelligence she has fashioned not only her repertoire, but her style as well, to this end.

There is always "news" in her programs, and on Sunday afternoon at the Auditorium, when she made her fifth annual appearance in the Northwestern series on the history and enjoyment of music, the high spots were, as usual, carefully and artistically planned, and placed with genius.

Sings Three Arias Lightly.

The three Handel arias with which she commenced she sang lightly, rather than with the true Handelian largeness of coloratura which has, indeed, almost disappeared from vocal usage. There followed a group of five Schubert songs, virtually unknown to the present generation. The third of these, "Meeresstille," gave her opportunity for an even fuller use of ghostly tone than she has had in "Death and the Maiden." The fourth was "Men Are All 'Mechant,'" a naughty song which Schubert set in waltz time and which Miss Anderson sang with a delicious detachment and with an arresting forecast of the brilliancy of color which was to set the later portion of her recital ablaze with tone.

The Card Scene from "Carmen," closing the first half of the program, was superb.

Sings a Miniature Drama.

After the intermission the distinguished Negro contralto substituted for the first listed song Geni Sadero's "Amuri, Amuri," it had last been sung here by the late Sophie Braslau. Miss Anderson gave it a glorious cantilena, and of the sleepy carter's adjurations to his mule she made a miniature drama. Florence Price's "Songs to the Dark Virgin," which followed, was, as Miss Anderson sang it, one of the greatest immediate successes ever won by an American song. There followed two songs, and an encore by Miss Anderson's admirable accompanist, the Finnish pianist Kosti Vehanen. Of these "A Fairy Tale," in which Miss Anderson incidentally imitates a scurrying bunny, will doubtless take its place in her repertoire of encores with "Cuckoo" and "Will-o'-the-Wisp."

There followed a group of four spirituals, with some extras, sung with an opulence and a tenderness and an imagination that give her a second stamp of greatness at the close of each of her recitals. Then at the close of the encores came the "Ave Maria" of Schubert, theme song of her fame. The immense audience was filled and silenced; everyone knew that the afternoon was ended.

Will Sing Again April 21.

Miss Anderson sang gloriously, with a breadth of line, a variety of color and a freedom of expression altogether her own, altogether Negro in its manifestation and its genius, absolutely unexampled in its artistry. She sang, too with the greatest dignity, with much sweetness and with the most persuasive charm. There was something intensely personal in the audience's adulation of her; there was also something quite sensitive in its expressions, so that the mere sight of someone's red roses against her blue dress sent an extra thrill into the applause that beat upon her from every hand.

Miss Anderson makes a second appearance at the Auditorium April 21 and the seats for this program are already on sale.

Wander Thirst
The Poet & His Song } to Marian Anderson c/o Hurok, Feb. 21, 1940

Meeting Waters
Beside the Sea } to Gladys Swarthout c/o Wm. Tessner for accomp. Hodges Feb 21, 40

Some of These Days
Go Down Moses
The Glory of the Day (J. W. Johnson) } to Dorothy Manor
Beyond the Years
Feb 22, 1940 c/o Adler & Evans
acknowledged when she appeared here in recital Mar.

Send "My Neighbor" ~~to Lawrence Tibbett~~ Jno. Chas. Thomas
Mar 10, 1940 to Jno. Chas. Thomas Govt. BC Artists

Differing (Mystery)
the Rebel
Night
What of the Use } acknowledgment rec'd Mar 16 fr. his secretary

The Book of American Negro Poetry, edited by James Weldon Johnson (Harcourt Brace & Co.)

PS

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